

# INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE

Decolonialization and Movements  
for Environmental Justice



WEDZIN KWA  
CHECKPOINT  
UNISTOTEN  
TERRITORY

NO ACCESS  
WITHOUT  
CONSENT

EDITED BY  
**Jaskiran Dhillon**

## INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE



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Decolonialization and Movements  
for Environmental Justice

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berghahn

NEW YORK • OXFORD  
[www.berghahnbooks.com](http://www.berghahnbooks.com)

First published in 2022 by  
Berghahn Books  
www.berghahnbooks.com

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Originally published as a special issue of  
*Environment & Society: Advances in Research*, Volume 9, issue 1 (2018)

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#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Dhillon, Jaskiran, 1974- editor.  
Title: Indigenous resurgence / edited by Jaskiran Dhillon.  
Other titles: Environment & society. Vol. 9, Issue 1 (2018).  
Description: Brooklyn : Berghahn Books, 2022. | Includes bibliographical  
references and index.  
Identifiers: LCCN 2021048232 | ISBN 9781800732452 (hardback) | ISBN  
9781800732469 (paperback) | ISBN 9781800732858 (open access ebook)  
Subjects: LCSH: Indigenous peoples. | Ethnoecology. | Human ecology. |  
Environmental protection--Social aspects. | Environmental justice. |  
Capitalism--Environmental aspects.  
Classification: LCC GN380 .I38 2022 | DDC 305.8—dc23/eng/20211029  
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021048232>

#### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-80073-245-2 hardback  
ISBN 978-1-80073-246-9 paperback  
ISBN 978-1-80073-285-8 open access ebook

<https://doi.org/10.3167/9781800732452>



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initiative and links to the Open Access version can be found at [knowledgeunlatched.org](http://knowledgeunlatched.org).



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## INTRODUCTION

# Indigenous Resurgence, Decolonization, and Movements for Environmental Justice

*Jaskiran Dhillon*

### Setting the Stage

In multiple sites across the world, Indigenous peoples are leading political and social movements for environmental justice. Indigenous history, politics, epistemologies and resistance have much to offer in the way of advancing an aggressive agenda to mitigate climate change—Indigenous communities and collectives across the planet currently protect eighty percent of the world’s biodiversity and climate science has repeatedly indicated that water, land, and ecosystems under the care and governance of Indigenous peoples have been kept more in-tact in terms of species survival and the retention of intact and functioning ecosystems, and they are less ravaged by the longstanding impact of global racial capitalism.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Indigenous peoples are holding the line against some of the most destructive and violent environmental projects, both slow and fast, across the globe.

In Indigenous North America, as a case in point, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe spearheaded the resistance against the Dakota Access Pipeline and historic environmental damage to the Missouri River, and a collective of Indigenous land and water defenders are actively mobilizing in opposition to Enbridge’s Line 3—a pipeline that would traverse Anishinaabe land in Minnesota, deeply impacting wild rice production and contaminating waterways. Indigenous Newar communities in Nepal have been protesting the Fast Track Road Project and other destructive development projects. Responses to climate change in Peru are also being conceptualized and enacted by Indigenous youth who are on the frontlines of the latest



forms of colonial devastation. And in India, Adivasi communities are organizing against the exclusion of traditionally dependent forest communities from equal participation in forest governance.<sup>2</sup> These are only a few examples of the strategic ways in which Indigenous peoples are challenging structures of contemporary global racial capitalism, standing up and speaking out to protect the land, water, and air from further contamination and ruination, and embodying long-standing forms of relationality and kinship that counter Western epistemologies of human/nature dualism. As the essays in this collection will reveal, Indigenous peoples are mapping the contours of alternative modes of social, political, and economic organization that speak to the past, present, *and* the future—catapulting us into a moment of critical, radical reflection about the substantive scope and limitations of “mainstream environmentalism”<sup>3</sup> and demanding that this movement be accountable, first and foremost, to the struggle for Native liberation alongside the liberation of all colonized peoples.

The idea for this edited collection first originated in the Fall of 2016 during a conversation I had with anthropologist Paige West while we were organizing in New York City in support of the Standing Rock Sioux’s resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline through the New York Stands with Standing Rock Collective. Our discussion circulated around the notable lack of Indigenous writers, thinkers, and political organizers being published in environmental studies journals and in public media platforms (often publishing pieces that are deeply apolitical and ahistorical), and the paucity of literature in academic and journalistic arenas that made explicit linkages between colonialism and climate change<sup>4</sup> as well as highlighted the histories of resistance of frontline Indigenous communities, many of whom have been fighting against the environmental violence of colonialism since the onset of occupation in what is now known as the United States of America.<sup>5</sup> Academia, has, in fact, played an *active role* in perpetuating colonial relations of power by subverting and sidelining the theorizing, research, writing, and movement organizing efforts of Indigenous scholars and their allies who are challenging historical and present-day conditions of dispossession, violent state formation, white supremacy, violence, criminalization, as well as the economic structures of global capitalism that have concentrated power and wealth in the hands of a few at the expense of many. Our collective effort to offer an intervention, an anti-colonial counterpoint to the epistemic violence of academic knowledge production in the growing fields of environmental anthropology, political ecology, and environmental studies more generally, became a special issue of *Environment and Society* upon which this edited collection is based—now converted into book form and more urgently needed than ever.

Those who are fervently working on issues of environmental justice and climate change know the stakes of what we are facing. While the contours of this book took shape several years back it is being published at a time when the world is teetering on the precipice of irreversible climate change,<sup>6</sup> on a planet where millions of people are dispossessed and live in conditions of severe deprivation (as of 2021, 696 million human beings live in extreme poverty on less than \$1.90 a day)<sup>7</sup>—a planet where fascism and authoritarianism are on the rise, where access to water is becoming increasingly precarious and at the same time massive floods are expected to displace millions of people, where migration is met with the increasing securitization and militarization of colonial borders that are resulting in violent and deadly assaults on families and their relations, where children are separated from their parents and caged in detention facilities—entirely closed off from the outside world, where the murders of everyday Brown, Black, and Indigenous people are sanctioned by the state and go unseen and often uncontested.

We are living in a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged the worlds in different ways, with varying degrees and scales of exposure, vulnerability, stress, and uncertainty. This deeply troubling context of ongoing violence and suffering requires being honest about the injustices and inequalities that have long existed but are rising to the fore as the virus moves across the planet. Here on Turtle Island, we have seen the ways that structural

colonial violence has created ideal conditions for the virus to have devastating impacts on Indigenous, Black, and Latino communities, on migrants being held in detention centers, and on countless people who are imprisoned because of a racist and colonial criminal justice system—all of this, of course, is a continuation of the oppressive structures that have long existed.<sup>8</sup> The fractures and failings of privatized health care were ever more apparent in the midst of our “global lockdown” and we have seen how our “essential workers”—the people who make day to day life in this country possible—remained subject to exposure as they continued to work on the frontlines of colonial systems of food distribution, transportation, and health care.

To say it simply: we need radical changes in our social, political, and economic systems and we need them now. A centralized focus on environmental justice is not about creating an isolated silo in which all of us committed to this work can go about our business—it is about understanding and acting upon the foundational significance of decolonial knowledge, history, and resistance in everything we do and this means supporting the work of Indigenous leaders across the world who are charting a different path into the future across multiple avenues of social, political and economic life. The “environment” is everything, everywhere.

Turning towards Indigenous resurgence also demands centering decolonial epistemologies and cosmologies that challenge dominant, colonial, and Eurocentric knowledge systems while promoting the dismantling of the social and political and knowledge-based infrastructure necessary to sustain white settler society—a decolonial epistemology that is necessarily unsettling, anti-hegemonic, anchored to the political goals of anti-colonial liberation struggles and works against the accumulation and reproduction of settler histories. Such perspectives also reject the privileging of dualism, “universal truths,” and the normalization of dominant Eurodescendant epistemologies that actively work to silence, invisibilize, and delegitimize other ways of knowing and constructing meaning about the world.<sup>9</sup> Knowledge matters.

Perhaps one of the most distinct signposts of a decolonial epistemology has to do with the meaning of land. What I have learned over the years from leaders like Ladonna Bravebull Allard and Freda Huson is that resistance to extractive, fossil fuel projects is not just a struggle over the preservation of the environment—the *land* upon which the Oceti Sakowin and the Wet’suwet’en people have lived for hundreds of years, far before the creation of the settler colonies of the United States of America and Canada, is life itself. It is home. It is memory. It is the keeper of ancestral stories and intergenerational truths. It provides sustenance and medicines in the every day. It marks time. It offers creative guidance and makes certain kinds of ceremonies possible. It teaches. It adapts. It produces life. And it carries the ecological, social and political history upon which a peoples’ move into the future. Susan Hill remarks in *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River*, “for the Haudenosaunee, land is possibly the best point of reference for considering history. Historical knowledge and lessons embodied in the Haudenosaunee cultural history demonstrate land and territory as the prime determinants of Haudenosaunee identity. So if one seeks to understand Haudenosaunee history one must consider the history of Haudenosaunee land” (2017 p. 3). When we think of land through the resistance efforts of Indigenous communities, then, we are immediately confronted with questions of colonialism, of occupation, of domination, and multiple forms of epistemic violence that quite literally fuel the transformation of the environment. We are forced to ask: what would it mean to put the land first?<sup>10</sup>

Alongside decolonial conceptualizations of the meaning of land, a focus on Indigenous resurgence as it relates to questions of environmental justice and climate change necessarily pivots to ecologies of resistance and practices of solidarity. How do we engage in debates and dialogues about power and history in our everyday organizing in order to knit together our social positions and experiences of oppression, marginalization, *and* resistance while being attentive to the specificities of particular struggles—resonant with Jacqui Alexander’s

call for feminists of color to become “fluent in each other’s histories” (Alexander 2006) and Angela Davis’s plea to foster “unlikely coalitions” (Davis 1998). How do we develop stronger relationships with one another that enact material solidarity, explore the ways that we our stories and lives have become co-constituted and identify the spaces within intellectual and organizing contexts that enable the fostering of a critical relationality and center multiple colonial histories?

Importantly, global Indigenous land and water defense also illuminates the importance of adopting an internationalist, anti-imperialist lens in the context of solidarity movements. The United States has contributed more to the problem of excess carbon dioxide than any other country on the planet. According to Worldwatch Institute, “The United States, with less than 5% of the global population, uses about a quarter of the world’s fossil fuel resources—burning up nearly 25% of the coal, 26% of the oil, and 27% of the world’s natural gas.” The U.S. Department of Defense is both the country’s and the world’s, largest polluter; in fact, U.S. military bases rank as some of the most polluted places on the planet. Indeed, with a sprawling network of bases and logistics networks, the U.S. military is the single biggest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world aside from whole nation-states themselves. The struggle for climate justice here in Native North America, then, is also an internationalist fight against American imperialism—the land and water-based struggles in the United States serves as inspiration for other communities fighting racial capitalism and environmental devastation all over the world.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Context of Indigenous Inclusion in Environmental Politics and Overview of the Book**

Within the mainstream environmental justice movement, the knowledge and social practices of Indigenous communities have sparked considerable attention. Indeed, in the wake of a planetwide movement riddled with idioms about “saving our home,” there has been a tidal wave of interest in Indigenous knowledge(s) about the land, water, and sky—a desire to “capture and store” the intergenerational wisdom that speaks to the unpredictable path lying ahead. For instance, littered throughout academic writing, climate justice protests, and climate science reports are a host of references to the importance of harnessing Indigenous knowledge systems in the service of global sustainability. As a case in point, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change summary report for 2014 asserts: “Indigenous, local, and traditional knowledge systems and practices, including indigenous peoples’ holistic view of community and environment, are a major resource for adapting to climate change, but these have not been used consistently in existing adaptation efforts. *Integrating* such forms of knowledge with existing practices increases the effectiveness of adaptation” (IPCC 2014, 26 emphasis added). More recently, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and former US President Barack Obama issued a joint statement on climate, energy, and Arctic leadership that makes an explicit reference to Indigenous science and traditional knowledge by stating that, “Canada and the US are committed to collaborating with Indigenous and Arctic governments, leaders, and communities to more broadly and respectfully *include* Indigenous science and traditional knowledge into decision making, including environmental assessments, resource management, and advancing our understanding of climate change and how best to manage its effect” (PMO 2016, emphasis added). Particularly noteworthy within both of these frames is the vernacular of integration and inclusion that underlies the broader impetus for seeking Indigenous knowledge.

While at first glance these inclusionary politics could be considered to be a move in the right direction—the “integration” of Indigenous knowledge as something to be used in the interests of global recovery from environmental crisis—it merits a deeper and more

nanced reading. Pushing us to consider the problematics associated with state-driven “discovery” of Indigenous knowledge, Deborah McGregor highlights the way in which Indigenous knowledge of the environment is derived through a living process that stems from Indigenous relationships to “Creation.” It is produced through a body of ancient thought, experience and *action*— it is generated by the *things that one does* rather than something that one simply knows. She argues, “The ‘natural world,’ ‘environment,’ or ‘Creation’ is an essential part of the conception of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is not just ‘knowledge’ per se. It is the lives lived by people and their particular relationship with Creation” (McGregor 2004, 390). From McGregor’s perspective, Indigenous knowledge is not a noun, it is not a commodity or product that can be drawn upon as a last-ditch effort to be integrated into a battalion of adaptive solutions to save us all. To acquire this knowledge means entirely shifting our current patterns of living in the everyday—it is cumulative and dynamic, adaptive and ancestral, and it is produced in a collective process that is fundamentally centered on the *way* one relates. Mishuana Goeman furthers this point when she speaks of the complexity, history, and political vitality in *a storied land*—a land that literally and figuratively acts as a placeholder that moves through time and situates Indigenous knowledges (Goeman, 2008: 24). “Indigenous scholars” Goeman writes, “must continue to think of space or the function of land as more than a site *upon* which humans make history or as a location that accumulates history” (Goeman, 2008: 24).

We might ask, then, whose interests are being served by attempts to extract and distill bits and pieces of Indigenous knowledge to work in the service of climate recovery? What is lost in this process of “integration” when it is not occurring in conjunction with moves toward decolonization that center the question of colonization and its impacts, when there is not a clear intention to understand how the colonial spatial restructuring of the land has affected Indigenous relationships to land? Despite the fixation on Indigenous knowledge systems, it seems, limited attempts have been made to theorize how conquest and persistent settler colonial violence necessarily factor into debates over the climate crisis and environmental injustice more generally—this, despite the creation of territories of material and psychic abandonment largely fuelled by white settlers and “settlement.” Critical questions need to be asked: How are Indigenous political demands for decolonization taken up within the broader scope of planetary dystopia, impending for some and already here for others? How might “environmental justice” work to (re)inscribe hegemonies of settler colonial power by foregrounding settler interests? How do the experiences of older, younger and not-yet-here generations factor into thinking through strategies for combatting environmental injustice? In a similar vein, Zoe Todd (2016) asks: “What does it mean to have a reciprocal discourse on catastrophic end times and apocalyptic environmental change in a place where, over the last 500 years, Indigenous peoples faced (and face) the end of the worlds with the violent incursion of colonial ideologies and actions? What does it mean to hold, in simultaneous tension, stories of the Anthropocene in the past, present, and future?” (Todd, 2016).

To address these lines of inquiry, this book aims to set forth a theoretical and discursive interruption of the dominant, mainstream environmental justice movement by reframing issues of climate change and environmental degradation through an anti-colonial lens. Specifically, the writers for this collection are invested in positioning environmental justice within historical, social, political, and economic contexts and larger structures of power that foreground the relationships among settler colonialism, nature, and planetary devastation. The nine critical appraisals presented here also move across a range of socio-political spaces and realities (ranging from site-specific resistance efforts to broader theoretical discussions) and thus carry significant import when translated to an anti-colonial deconstruction of the underlying politics and ideologies inherent to the dominant environmental justice movement as a whole. By offering this range of perspectives this volume reaches to:

- 1) illuminate how mainstream environmental justice politics are inherently preoccupied

with the maintenance of settler state sovereignty and settler futurity; 2) showcase how Indigenous struggles to protect and defend the land, water, and air are embedded within Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies that fundamentally challenge settler domination over nature and are inextricably linked to advancing decolonization; and 3) raise important questions about solidarity and politicized allyship with Indigenous communities as they engage in resistance efforts to protect their homelands and assert political claims for self-determination.

The book opens with “*Mino-Mnaadmodzawin: Achieving Indigenous Environmental Justice in Canada*,” an essay by Deborah McGregor. The article explores the potential for advancing environmental justice (EJ) theory and practice by engaging with Indigenous intellectual traditions. In particular, McGregor highlights the reemergence of the philosophy referred to by the Anishinaabe as *mino-mnaadmodzawin* (living well or the “good life”). Common to numerous Indigenous epistemologies, this philosophy considers the critical importance of mutually respectful and beneficial relationships not only among peoples, but among all relations.

Next, in “Decolonizing Development in Diné Bikeyah: Resource Extraction, Anti-capitalism, and Relational Futures,” Melanie Yazzie employs an Indigenous feminist perspective to take us to the homelands of the Navajo Nation where resisters are fighting “natural resource” extraction through anti-capitalist and anti-development politics. Yazzie deftly argues that development is not only a violent modality of capitalism, but in its connection to resource extraction is also a violent form of extractivism that seeks to kill Diné life. Several concerns raised by Yazzie are mirrored in Anne Spice’s “Fighting Invasive Infrastructure: Indigenous Relations Against Pipelines” in which pipeline politics take center stage. Spice’s article tracks how the state discourse of “critical infrastructure” naturalizes the environmental destruction wrought by the oil and gas industry while criminalizing Indigenous resistance.

Questions of infrastructure and development are, of course, tied to particular conceptualizations of land and human relationships to and with it. In their essay “Unsettling the Land: Indigeneity, Ontology, and Hybridity in Settler Colonialism,” Paul Burow, Samara Brock, and Michael R. Dove examine different ontologies of land in settler colonialism and Indigenous movements for decolonization and environmental justice. “Hunting for Justice: An Indigenous Critique of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation,” by Lauren Eichler and David Baumeister, complements this critical engagement with land ontologies by problematizing wildlife conservation policies and related hunting regulations that are antithetical to Indigenous views, interrupt Indigenous lifeways, and contribute to the destruction of Indigenous identity.

Moving to a critical analysis of symbolic power within the mainstream environmental justice movement, Rebekah Sinclair’s “Righting Names: The Importance of Native American Philosophies of Naming For Environmental Justice” explores the politics and history of naming places, landmarks, environments, and species. To counter longstanding colonial practices of naming, Sinclair points toward several principles of Indigenous naming and considers how Native names reflect relational ontologies and are thus central components in creating Indigenous communities, which include both human and nonhuman agents.

Tracing the problematics of colonial political power, “Damaging Environments: Land, Settle Colonialism, and Security for Indigenous Peoples” by Wilfrid Greaves theorizes why Indigenous peoples’ security claims fail to be accepted by government authorities and/or incorporated into the security policies and practices of settler states. By engaging the concepts of securitization and ontological security, Wilfrid explicates how Indigenous peoples are blocked from ‘speaking’ security to the state.

In “Settler Colonialism, Ecology and Environmental Injustice” Kyle Whyte circles back to a crucial and critical appraisal of settler colonialism as it is intertwined directly with

environmental justice. Whyte characterizes settler colonialism as ecological domination, as a form of governance committing environmental injustice against Indigenous peoples and other groups. Focusing on the context of Indigenous peoples facing domination in the United States, this article also investigates, philosophically, how settler colonialism commits environmental injustice.

The book concludes with an article by Joe Curnow and Anjai Helferty entitled “Contradictions of Solidarity: Whiteness, Settler Coloniality, and the Mainstream Environmental Movement.” Here, Curnow and Helferty bring forth essential questions about the racialized and colonial underpinnings of mainstream environmentalism and highlight implications of this history for solidarity work and politicized allyship with Indigenous nations.

Taken together, this collection of articles provide a powerful anticolonial counterscript to the assumptions and underlying political ideologies of the mainstream environmental justice movement. They remind us of the fundamental importance of placing Indigenous politics, histories and ontologies at the center of our social movements for environmental justice. And they make clear that contemporary manifestations of colonial violence are deeply interconnected with environmental violence. Arundhati Roy writes in her conclusion to *Walking With the Comrades*, “If there is any hope for the world at all, it does not live in climate change conference rooms or in cities with tall buildings. It lives low down on the ground, with its arms around the people who go to battle every day to protect their forests, their mountains, and their rivers because they know that the forests, the mountains and the rivers protect them. .... the first step towards reimagining a world gone terribly wrong would be to stop the annihilation of those who have a different imagination.” The perspectives brought forward in this book present glimpses into this kind of imagination and present alternative ways of building relations with one another and the world around us—a guidepost for beginning to conceptualize and embody decolonization centered on the restoration of Indigenous modes of relating that privilege interconnection, interdependence, and the continuity of life. They offer us a series of lifelines.

■ **JASKIRAN DHILLON** is an anti-colonial scholar and organizer who grew up on Treaty Six Cree Territory in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her work spans the fields of settler colonialism, anthropology of the state, environmental justice, anti-racist feminism, colonial violence, political ecology, and youth studies. Her writing has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Feminist Formations*, *Environment and Society*, *Social Texts*, and *Decolonization* among other venues. She is the author of *Prairie Rising: Indigenous Youth, Decolonization, and the Politics of Intervention* (2017) and co-editor of *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement* (2019). Her new book, *Notes on Becoming a Comrade: Solidarity, Relationality, and Future Making* is forthcoming in 2022. Jaskiran is an associate professor of global studies and anthropology at The New School and served as the founding president of The New School’s AAUP Chapter. She is also building a radical, community bookstore in West Philadelphia. Email: dhillonj@newschool.edu

## ■ NOTES

1. Please see Cedric Robinson’s (1983) *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* for a fulsome account of this theory of racial capitalism.
2. See <https://science.thewire.in/environment/advansi-struggle-environmental-justice-consent-principle-economic-development/>

3. For an excellent synopsis of “mainstream environmentalism” see Paige West and Dan Brockington’s “Introduction: Capitalism and the Environment” in *Environment and Society* Vol. 3, 2012, pp. 1–3.
4. These linkages are hauntingly and beautifully captured in Esme Murdock’s (2021) recent essay “On Telling the Truth Unflinchingly: Climate Catastrophe and Colonialism.” Murdock writes, “The horrors of the last 500 years on Turtle Island (North America)—and the planet, more generally—are obvious, well-studied, and well-known. These histories live in the minds, hearts, bodies, and spirits of the global populations who have borne the brunt and lived the apocalypses that white supremacist colonization, imperialism, and capitalism have created and continue to create. And yet, within all this, people are still attempting to carve out a space of innocence—a hiding place beneath, within, or close to whiteness that might protect them.”
5. As Dina Gillio-Whitaker reminds us, “It [this book] starts from the assumption that colonization was not just a process of invasion and eventual domination of Indigenous populations by European settlers but also that the eliminatory impulse and structure it created in actuality began as environmental injustice. Seen in this light, settler colonialism itself is for Indigenous peoples a structure of environmental injustice (2019 p. 12).
6. See the recent report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, released in August 2021, for the latest research on worldwide climate crisis. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>
7. See <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/feb/03/decades-of-progress-on-extreme-poverty-now-in-reverse-due-to-covid> and <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/march-2021-global-poverty-update-world-bank>
8. For more information on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 along race and class lines, please see: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/communities-of-color-devastated-by-covid-19-shifting-the-narrative-202102221201>
9. For more on decolonial epistemology please see Esme Murdock’s “Unsettling Reconciliation: Decolonial Methods for Transforming Social-Ecological Systems.” *Environmental Values*. 27 (5): 513–533, 2018.
10. For a fulsome account of “Land Back” including reflections and guidelines pertaining to the return of jurisdiction over territories to Indigenous peoples, please see *Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper* (Toronto, Yellowhead Institute, 2019). Available at: <https://redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org/>
11. The Cost of War Project at Brown University offers a comprehensive account of the relationship between the US military and fossil fuel consumption, as well as related questions about environmental pollution due to militarization.

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## CHAPTER 1

### *Mino-Mnaamodzawin*

#### Achieving Indigenous Environmental Justice in Canada

*Deborah McGregor*

“To think that Indigenous concepts of justice do not exist is Eurocentric thought.”

—Wenona Victor

Environmental justice (EJ) has several definitions but can generally be thought of as the equitable distribution of environmental burdens and benefits across racial, ethnic, and economic groups. Despite well-documented cases of environmental injustice in Canada, particularly involving Indigenous peoples (Agyeman et al. 2009; Dhillon and Young 2010; Draper and Mitchell 2001; Walkem 2007), the country lags significantly behind in scholarship and policy innovations on this issue compared with the United States (Haluza-Delay 2007). In the United States, an EJ policy framework, including a unique Indigenous and tribal component, has existed now for two decades. Having said this, US policies have thus far failed to adequately address environmental injustices in many instances, as aptly demonstrated in the case of the Dakota Access Pipeline project noted by Kyle Whyte (2017) and other contributors to this volume.

Criticisms and limitations of EJ efforts in the United States have been well documented by Indigenous peoples and other groups (Trainor et al. 2007). Various US tribes have asserted that their unique legal-political status affords them a set of considerations that are clearly not accommodated in the current EJ framework. The legal scholar Dean Suagee has



pointed out the limitations of EJ's application in a tribal context, noting the misunderstanding of both the source and nature of Indigenous sovereignty, laws, and governance in the US EJ context. He observes: "One of the key differences between Indian tribes and other 'communities of color' whose interests are championed under the banner of Environmental Justice, is that Indian tribes are sovereign governments. Unlike other communities of color, Indian tribes have the power to make and enforce their own laws" (1994: 471). Jace Weaver also writes that in contrast to the mainstream EJ discourse, "discussion of environmental justice from a Native perspective requires an analysis of sovereignty and the legal framework that governs environmental matters in Indian country" (1996: 107).

In looking toward a resolution of this situation, which in turn could have application in Canada and elsewhere, this article asks, "What is Indigenous environmental justice (IEJ)?" and furthermore, "What does IEJ look like once achieved?" In practical terms, will it be sufficient to adapt current EJ frameworks to accommodate and better reflect the context and experience of Indigenous peoples, or will the development of a novel and uniquely Indigenous framework be required?

In part, the IEJ scholarship is very much concerned with the documentation of injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples and their environments/homelands/territories. This is critical work with the goal of achieving redress and holding those responsible to account. Bodies of scholarship exist in this area, although much of it is not theoretically or methodologically Indigenous *per se*, despite Indigenous peoples' lands and issues often being of central concern. By "not Indigenous," I simply mean that Indigenous peoples have their own worldviews, theories, epistemologies, and methodologies, which can and should inform critical discussion related to IEJ. This assertion builds on international scholarship that has emerged in the Indigenous research area more generally, in which Indigenous theories and knowledge systems have become a required starting point for inquiry (L. T. Smith 1999; Wilson 2008). This approach avoids the all-too-common pitfall of scholarly endeavors that, while possibly intending to be constructive, end up undermining or otherwise causing significant harm to Indigenous epistemes and subsequently Indigenous peoples themselves through a lack of consideration and respect for Indigenous intellectual traditions (Kuokkanen 2007). Or, as the Indigenous scholar Sarah Hunt states, "Indigenous knowledge is rarely seen as legitimate on its own terms, but must be negotiated in relation to the pre-established mode of inquiry" (2014: 29). If we are to implement the more enlightened approach, in which Indigenous worldviews, philosophies, and theories form the basis of our understanding of IEJ, what might that look like?

We know from the existing scholarship that environmental (in)justice, as it pertains to Indigenous peoples, involves a unique set of considerations that necessitates the drawing of conceptions of Indigenous sovereignty, law, justice, and governance into the conversation (Westra 2008; Whyte 2011). It requires an examination not only of power relations among peoples (that tend to result in a disproportionate burden being shouldered by less dominant segments of society) but also of the colonial legacy that continues to play out in laws, court cases, and policies that systematically, institutionally, and structurally enable ongoing assaults on Indigenous lands and lives (Whyte 2017). In this article, I suggest that the scholarship can be extended even further to consider the worldviews, philosophies, and knowledges of Indigenous peoples as central tenets in defining Indigenous environmental justice concepts.

This article thus explores the rationale for developing distinct Indigenous EJ conceptual frameworks. This in turn requires that Indigenous conceptions and modes of achieving of justice, such as reconciliation, be made visible. There are many Indigenous theoretical and intellectual innovations to draw on, such as the recognition of Indigenous knowledge

systems in environmental governance and conservation (Kimmerer 2012; McGregor 2014; Whyte 2013), the increasingly distinct modes of Indigenous research inquiry (Craft 2017; Lambert 2014), the resurgence of Indigenous legal traditions (Borrows 2002, 2010; Craft 2014; Napoleon 2007), and the role of reconciliation in achieving justice. Reconciliation as conceptualized ontologically by Indigenous peoples (as distinct from state-conceived and -sponsored frameworks) requires reconciliation beyond the human dimension to include “relationships with the Earth and all living beings” (TRC 2015: 122).

As Indigenous legal traditions begin to receive greater attention in Canada and elsewhere, these traditions may become recognized for holding practical means for achieving Indigenous environmental justice. What role do Indigenous legal orders play in expressions of “injustice” and achieving “justice” in the environmental realm? There are also practical implications for defining Indigenous environmental justice/injustice from an Indigenous theoretical standpoint. There is the potential for Indigenous peoples to take the lead and develop their own laws, policies, and frameworks for EJ as part of realizing self-governance, self-determination, and sovereignty goals.

It is my argument that achieving Indigenous environmental justice will require more than simply incorporating Indigenous perspectives into existing EJ theoretical and methodological frameworks (as valuable as these are). Indigenous peoples must move beyond “Indigenizing” existing EJ frameworks and seek to develop distinct frameworks that are informed by Indigenous intellectual and traditions, knowledge systems, and laws. In so doing, we must remember that Indigenous nations themselves are diverse and distinct. No single IEJ framework will serve all contexts and situations, though there will be commonalities, as evidenced through various international environmental declarations prepared by Indigenous peoples over the past three decades (McGregor 2016). For the purposes of this article, it will be necessary to discuss IEJ traditions primarily in terms of these commonalities, although I will emphasize Anishinaabek perspectives, as these reflect my own culture and upbringing.

One of the major commonalities of Indigenous perspectives in relation to IEJ, and a key way in which Indigenous peoples differ markedly from their non-Indigenous counterparts, involves the conception of humanity’s relationships with “other orders of beings” (King 2013), or what Melissa Nelson (2013) calls the “more-than human world.” Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) draw on a set of Indigenous metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological assumptions about the place of humanity in the world. In addition, they convey key ideas, concepts, and principles that constitute the foundation of Indigenous laws and codes of conduct, including specific direction on how people are to relate to all of Creation (Borrows 2010a). The instructions, protocols, laws, and ethics that are conveyed in IKS guide humanity in proper conduct, and these instructions often come directly from the natural world (water, plants, wind, animals, etc.). The Anishinabek, for example, take clan names (*dodem*) from among the first animals that are said to have died for the people and as such are considered “relatives” (Johnston 2006). Furthermore, many Anishinabek characterize Earth as a living entity with feelings, thoughts, and agency (ability to make choices) (Borrows 2010a; Johnston 2006). Exploration of such concepts will provide a much deeper understanding of environmental injustices facing Indigenous peoples and their relatives/teachers (McGregor 2009) and should lead to viable approaches to addressing such injustices. Such work will necessitate an articulation, from an Indigenous theoretical foundation, of the laws, norms, protocols, knowledges, and traditions that are essential for achieving Indigenous environmental justice. Of critical importance here is also what Indigenous peoples may hold as a vision for justice. What is the vision we are striving for? What does justice look like if other beings form a critical aspect of the process? I will

draw on the Anishinaabek concept of *mino-mnaamodzawin* (well-being) as a life goal common to many Indigenous peoples. For the Anishinabek, *mino-mnaamodzawin*, or “living well with the world,” encompasses the well-being of other “persons” and is the ideal being sought, although there are many paths to achieving it (Borrows 2016: 6).

*Mino-Mnaamodzawin* considers the critical importance of mutually respectful and beneficial relationships among not only peoples but all our relations, which includes all living things and many entities not considered by Western society as living, such as water, rocks, and Earth itself (McGregor 2016). *Mino-mnaamodzawin* is a holistic concept, involving living on respectful and reciprocal terms with all of Creation on multiple planes (spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical) and scales (family, clan, nation, and universe) (Bell 2013). The main idea is that one is continually striving for balance (LaDuke 1997). The Anishinabek have not abandoned the goal of *mino-mnaamodzawin*, which has emerged in a variety of contexts, including health, environment, political, legal, and educational, and remains as relevant today as it has been for thousands of years (Borrows 2016). A critical aspect of a distinct IEJ theoretical conception is to envision a future that enables *mino-mnaamodzawin* to foster.

The concept of *mino-mnaamodzawin* is examined as a potential foundational contributor to a new ethical standard of conduct that will be required if broader society is to begin engaging in appropriate relationships with all of Creation, thereby establishing a sustainable and just world. In this way, some of the seemingly differing goals of Indigenous peoples (e.g., reconciliation, self-government, self-determination, and sovereignty) are seen as pathways to achieving *mino-mnaamodzawin*.

## The EJ Context

The EJ movement emerged in part from a 1980s US grassroots movement aimed at preventing the state of North Carolina from dumping PCB into Warren County, an area with the highest number of African American citizens in the state. This was certainly not the first time hazardous waste deposits had been intentionally situated in close proximity to people of color and the poor, but the Warren Country protests brought national media attention to the issue and “triggered subsequent events that would increase the visibility and momentum of the environmental justice movement” (Mohai et al. 2009: 408). Initially, the EJ movement focused on people of color and the poor, and Indigenous peoples soon found a place within it to express similar inequalities (Agyeman et al. 2009; Haluza-Delay 2007; LaDuke 2005; Weaver 1996).

EJ scholars have been sympathetic to the concerns of Indigenous peoples, and rightly so (Scott 2015; Wiebe 2016). However, current EJ frameworks have not addressed some underlying and foundational justice issues. In Canada, three major public inquiries/commissions—the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP 1996), the Ipperwash Inquiry (Linden 2007), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 2015)—have confirmed that dominant Western political, structural, and legal systems do not often serve the interests of Indigenous peoples in Canada. It is also highly likely that the ongoing National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls will reveal still further systemic and structural injustices (Ambler 2014). Such truth-telling reveals that the lack of recognition for Aboriginal and treaty rights and Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination is part of the broader context that has failed to prevent continued injustices being perpetrated on Indigenous peoples. The context and lived reality of Indigenous peoples in Canada, as revealed by former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples James Anaya, points to continued environmental colonialism:

One of the most dramatic contradictions indigenous peoples in Canada face is that so many live in abysmal conditions on traditional territories that are full of valuable and plentiful natural resources. These resources are in many cases targeted for extraction and development by non-indigenous interests. While indigenous peoples potentially have much to gain from resource development within their territories, they also face the highest risks to their health, economy, and cultural identity from any associated environmental degradation. Perhaps more importantly, indigenous nations' efforts to protect their long term interests in lands and resources often fit uneasily into the efforts by private non-indigenous companies, with the backing of the federal and provincial governments, to move forward with resource projects. (2014: 19)

More recently, the TRC of Canada has referred to a legacy that includes "intense racism and the systemic discrimination Aboriginal people regularly experience in this country. . . . The beliefs and attitudes that were used to justify the establishment of residential schools are not things of the past: they continue to animate official Aboriginal policy today" (2015: 103–104). The TRC's main finding in this regard was the intention of successive Canadian governments to carry out nothing less than the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada in order to obtain lands and resources and get rid of the "Indian problem" (RCAP 1996: 1). Government and industry efforts to obtain access to and control over Indigenous peoples' lands and resources continue largely unabated. As the Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows declares, "Colonialism is not only a historic practice, it continues to be acted upon and reinvented in old and new forms to the detriment of Indigenous Peoples" (2016: 142). Within this context, it is reasonable to assume that continuing to rely on government and other non-Indigenous systems to resolve environmental injustices may not serve Indigenous peoples in the manner necessary and may in fact be to our detriment.

Existing analytical frameworks for examining injustice take various forms, such as distributive and procedural injustices (Dillon and Young 2010; Mascarenhas 2007), corrective justice, and recognition justice (Schlosberg 2004; Whyte 2011). Such frameworks identify, diagnose, analyze, and then seek recourse for environmental injustices facing disadvantaged and marginalized groups. While these frameworks remain relevant and important, they do not fully reflect Indigenous experiences or emerge out of Indigenous epistemologies. The need to reinvigorate the discourse that considers these realities persists, specifically in Canada, where EJ studies continue to evolve and further opportunities exist to shape the field theoretically, methodologically, and practically. These ideas are based on the worldview, philosophies, traditions, and values that govern Indigenous peoples' relationships with the natural world. Such perspectives will enrich the theoretical grounding and practice of environmental justice. Furthermore, if EJ studies and research are to benefit Indigenous communities, they must include knowledge, principles, and values already held and practiced by those communities. As the Stó:lō legal scholar Wenona Victor (2007: 17) observes:

If we continue to simply equate justice with punishment and choose to continue to ignore our own Indigenous teachings and concepts of justice, then we are forced to remain dependent upon colonial institutions. These institutions have been built upon colonial ideologies of racism and eurocentrism that perpetuate discrimination and oppression. The end result therefore should not be surprising: the colonial power imbalances are maintained and colonial ideologies are legitimized and enforced. Our lived misery will continue.

Indigenous peoples need to frame environmental justice issues from their own fundamental worldviews and epistemological standpoints. As Victor points out, we cannot rely solely on Western colonial frameworks of justice to adequately address the concerns of

Indigenous peoples. In addition to worldviews, the unique historical, political, and legal status of Indigenous peoples must be recognized in any efforts to meet their goals and aspirations, such as those outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The UNDRIP itself, or at least parts of it, can be thought of as contributing to a vision of IEJ (McGregor 2016). For example, Article 32 states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources” (UNGA 2007: 12). Through such directions, UNDRIP may serve as a useful guide for identifying environmental injustices and preventing some of them from occurring. It may also guide redress and restoration in places where injustices have already occurred. UNDRIP is limited, however, in that it relies on the will of nation-states for its implementation and, according to Article 46, does not challenge “the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States” (UNGA 2007: 14).

The UN’s human rights framework also offers a significant basis from which to pursue environmental justice. For example, the United Nations General Assembly established in 2010 a resolution recognizing “the human right to water and sanitation” (UNGA 2010). Recognition of the human right to water is unquestionably vital to human health and well-being, especially for Indigenous and other marginalized and oppressed peoples who currently lack readily available access to the water they need. From an Anishinaabek viewpoint, however, this recognition remains incomplete—and in the long run, unsustainable—in that it does not consider the well-being of other living entities (including water itself) as equally vital to the discussion (McGregor 2015). IEJ thus has the potential to expand existing Indigenous and human rights frameworks and further advance sustainability and justice.

### Drawing on Indigenous Concepts of Justice and Reconciliation

Speaking as a member of the Stó:lō Nation in British Columbia, Wenona Victor tells us that in her culture, any conception of justice necessarily includes relationships with *all* one’s relatives, “whether past, present or future as well our natural environment, plants, animals, trees, mountains, water, birds, rocks, etc. As all life is inter-related we are encouraged to strive for peace, balance and harmony” (2007: 22). Justice in this sense is not something that only humans seek, influence, or govern. Common to many (and perhaps all) Indigenous worldviews is the understanding that there are other “peoples” in the world who are deserving of justice or who can dispense justice if balance and interdependence are not respected. The Anishinaabek world, observes Theresa Smith, for example, is a “peopled cosmos,” a “place literally crowded with ‘people’” (1995: 44, 49). Many of these beings possess powers that influence the lives of humans. Thus, the Anishinaabek “always behaved toward phenomenon in the natural world as if he were dealing with his fellows” (60).

In this world, humans were heavily influenced by beings wielding greater powers than their own, and it was therefore imperative to respect the agency and will of these other beings. However, as Smith further notes, “Humans were not merely concerned with protecting their interests, for a system of interconnecting relationships led to a recognition of mutual responsibilities among all persons” (105). Borrows expands on the idea of mutual responsibility and obligations through the concept of *dibenindizowin* (the freedom to live well with others). *Dibenindizowin* “implies that a free person owns, is responsible for, and controls, how they interact with others” (2016: 7).

In the Anishinaabek worldview, inappropriate conduct toward each other and other nonhuman persons could result in an unbalanced world, a world that would be unjust

and dangerous. Making similar points, the Anishinaabe leader and activist Winona LaDuke (1997) refers to learning and practicing appropriate conduct as enacting “natural law”—law that is derived directly from observing and understanding the natural world. These laws governed human relationships with others and required vast environmental knowledge.

Human and Indigenous rights violations continue to occur on an all too frequent basis in Canada and elsewhere (Anaya 2014). To address the great imbalance in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, the TRC has called for a journey of reconciliation to be undertaken. However, limiting the discussion on reconciliation to relations between peoples exclusively is shortsighted, as is solely relying on a state-sponsored conception of reconciliation. Although justice inquiries and commissions have focused (and rightly so) on the Indigenous lived reality of oppression, dispossession, and violence, there is more to the story. Elder Reg Crowshoe explains:

Reconciliation requires talking, but our conversations must be broader than Canada’s conventional approaches. Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, from an Aboriginal perspective, also *requires reconciliation with the natural world. If human beings resolve problems between themselves but continue to destroy the natural world, then reconciliation remains incomplete.*

This is a perspective that we as Commissioners have repeatedly heard: that reconciliation will never occur unless *we are also reconciled with the earth*. Mi’kmaq and other Indigenous laws stress that humans must journey through life in conversation and negotiation with all creation. Reciprocity and mutual respect help sustain our survival. (quoted in TRC 2015, emphasis added)

Speaking in a similar vein, the Mi’kmaq and Abenaki scholar Lori Lambert adds:

Because we are the Indigenous people from a Place, healing the Place is just as critical as healing the community or the individual. The land has also been a victim of historical trauma; the lands, the waters, and the animals have swallowed the blood, bones, ashes, and screams of our ancestors. Healing the Land, the animals, and the waters is crucial. We heal the Place that makes us who we are; we heal ourselves; we heal the soul wounds that were inflicted on many of the Indigenous people of the earth. (2014: 46)

Indigenous conceptions of reconciliation as an expression of environmental justice extend beyond relationships between peoples. Returning these broader relationships to a balanced state may also help bring about reconciliation and healing in human society and with other orders of beings.

Some thought has been given to this premise in Indigenous EJ scholarship. In a previous article, “Honouring Our Relations: An Anishinabe Perspective on Environmental Justice” (McGregor 2009), I explain that environmental justice is not a new concept and that Indigenous peoples have highly developed ideas of justice that extend beyond the widely accepted conceptions of peoples and their relationships to environment. This exploratory work, based on Anishinaabek knowledge systems, demonstrated that Anishinaabek understandings of environmental justice include political, legal, and relational rights and responsibilities of “more-than-human” relatives (Nelson 2013). Furthermore, these responsibilities can be gender specific (Kermoal and Altamirano-Jiménez 2016; McGregor 2009). Utilizing Indigenous knowledge systems as a framework for analysis, it is argued that EJ applies to all “relatives” in Creation. EJ is not just about rights to a safe environment but also includes the duties and responsibilities of people to all beings, and, conversely, their responsibilities to people, that make up the concept. EJ is regarded as a question of balance and harmony, of reciprocity and respect, among all beings in Creation—not just between humans but among all “relatives.”

Indigenous legal traditions have particular relevance in this realm. For example, Borrows affirms that, “Anishinaabek law provides guidance about how to theorize, practice, and order our associations with the Earth, and does so in a way that produces answers that are very different from those found in other sources” (2010aa: 269). In this sense, by grounding conceptions of Indigenous justice (and injustice) in Anishinaabek law, possibilities open up for creativity and innovation in the field. This may well be true where any Indigenous intellectual traditions are applied. In his work on Indigenous legal traditions, including, *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (2002), *Canada’s Indigenous Constitution* (2010a), and *Drawing Out Law: A Spirit’s Guide* (2010b), Borrows establishes that Indigenous laws exist and function in their own right; they are just not yet recognized alongside other legal traditions.

Indigenous conceptions of environmental justice certainly do exist, although they may be conceptualized and implemented quite differently than what we see in “conventional” systems. In this and other ways, Indigenous approaches move beyond the simple notion of Indigenous peoples as being the victims of environmental injustice and toward understanding them as active agents who will shape how EJ will be conceptualized and then addressed. Indigenous peoples can contribute to the further development of EJ deliberations from a different worldview and set of assumptions about the world. In this sense, Indigenous perspectives of justice, such as those of the Anishinabek, can make significant contributions by expanding the prevailing ideology of justice such as those articulated in UNDRIP and in international human rights frameworks. Such perspectives create space for other possibilities and new paths toward justice.

### **Indigenous Legal Traditions and Non-Human Orders of Beings**

EJ scholars recognize that Indigenous peoples have rights that the state and others often fail to respect (Westra 2008). Recognition of, and respect for, Aboriginal and treaty rights in Canada is one avenue for ensuring movement toward a more just society (Walkem 2007). The focus on rights is necessary, yet often missed in the discussion of rights negotiated with the state is the recognition of Indigenous legal traditions that have existed for thousands of years and that emphasize a qualitatively different set of relationships requiring consideration. Indigenous laws flow from different sources (from the land, the Creator, the spiritual realm) and are embedded in Place-experienced as “the places we come from and call home, the places we care for and struggle over, the places that sustain us, the places we share” (Larson and Johnson 2017: 1). Although laws can be negotiated across nations and large geographic spaces, as seen in nation-to-nation treaties. Indigenous laws convey particular types of relationships with and responsibilities to each other as peoples, the natural world or environment, ancestors, the spirit world, and future generations (Borrows 2010a; Johnston 2006). These relationships are embedded in Place, as explained in the opening statement of the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en peoples in the Supreme Court of British Columbia in 1989:

For us, the ownership of territory is a marriage of the Chief and the land. Each Chief has an ancestor who encountered and acknowledged the life of the land. From such an encounter came power. The land, the plants, the animals and the people all have spirit—they all must be shown respect. This is the basis of our law.

The Chief is responsible for ensuring that all the people in his House respect the spirit in the land and in all living things. When a Chief directs his House properly and the laws are followed, then that original power can be recreated. . . .

My power is carried in my House's histories, songs, dances and crests. It is recreated at the Feast when the histories are told, the songs and dances performed, and the crests displayed. With the wealth comes the respectful use of the territory, the House feeds the name of the Chief in the Feast Hall. In this way, the law, the Chief, the territory, and the Feast become one. The unity of the Chief's authority and his House's ownership of the territory are witnessed and thus affirmed by the other Chiefs at the Feast.

By following the law, the power flows from the land to the people through the Chief; by using the wealth of the territory. (quoted in Wa and Uukw 1989: 7–8)

In the words shared by Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw, "The land, the plants, the animals and the people all have spirit—they all must be shown respect." This conveys a much broader range of justice considerations than currently exists in conventional legal systems. Respect for the spirit in all things is rooted in Indigenous legal orders. These other beings then are recipients of justice, just as humans are, and the hereditary chiefs are responsible for ensuring this justice is achieved for all living things under their authority.

The Anishinaabe Elder and educator Cecil King describes Anishinaabek legal traditions as "a code of conduct, a set of lessons, derived from the Law of the Orders. . . . They spoke of what was appropriate behavior, what was forbidden, and the responsibility ensuing from each. These laws pertained to the relationships among human beings as well as the awesome responsibilities of co-existence with members of the other orders" (2013: 5).

Inherent in Anishinaabek law are reciprocal responsibilities and obligations that are to be met in order to ensure harmonious relations. With rights come responsibilities. Responsibilities lie at the heart of Anishinaabek legal structure, according to Aimée Craft (2014). Anishinaabek legal obligations and responsibilities consider relationships among all our relations, including the spirit world, ancestors, those yet to come, and other powerful beings that inhabit the peopled cosmos. These legal considerations are supported by IKS, which emphasize not just the practice of acquiring knowledge and perhaps utilizing it, but also acquiring the knowledge needed to ensure harmonious and just relationships. The Anishinaabek developed laws, protocols, and practices over time to ensure that relationships with other orders of beings remained in balance and that life would continue. In this sense, as knowledge can come directly from the Land (by this I mean all of Creation) and expressed by Indigenous scholar Sandra Styres and collaborator Dawn Zinga as "For us, this refers to land as a living entity providing the central underpinnings for all life, the understanding of interconnected relationships, and is underscored by her capitalization as a proper name" (Zinga and Styres 2011: 62), all beings/entities/peoples have responsibilities to carry out in order to ensure the continuance of Creation.

The idea of Place / Land / Peopled Landscape is paramount in this theoretical framework. IKS and laws are read from the land (Borrows 2010a; Kimmerer 2013). The primary sources of Anishinaabek laws are experiences, living and observing the natural world / Creation (King 2013). Natural law comes from a natural, spiritual place (Craft 2014). Law, then, is all around us, if we know how to read it. In other words, properly understanding and enacting natural law requires vast knowledge of the natural world/environment, the more-than-human world, and how it functions in ensuring survival for all of Creation.

All beings and entities are affected by environmental injustices (Nelson 2013). Indigenous legal traditions inform a set of relationships, responsibilities, and obligations that extend far beyond relationships among peoples. Indigenous legal traditions reflect a set of reciprocal relationships and a coexistence with the natural world (McGregor 2015). In this justice context, balanced relationships are sought between humans and other entities in the natural world (animals, plants, birds, forests, waters, etc.) and other more powerful realms. Environmental injustice can be characterized not only as a lack of recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights (including rights to self-governance, sovereignty, and self-



determination) but also as a profound lack of knowledge of, and/or respect for, Indigenous laws that ensure proper conduct and relations among humans and others. If these sets of laws remain invisible or unacknowledged, then how can Indigenous justice be achieved? These very same Indigenous laws may offer appropriate approaches to achieving the justice that is so desperately needed. There are significant implications for the practice of EJ should Indigenous legal traditions gain legitimacy and expression alongside other laws.

EJ discourse often places the responsibility for achieving injustice firmly with governments (which often have a fiduciary responsibility to Indigenous people). Yet, in most cases, justice has not been served in these arrangements. If such responsibilities remain solely with governments using dominant Western systems of law, then it is unlikely that justice will ever be served in any kind of consistent or satisfactory way. Governments at all levels have not proven themselves sustainable in terms of environmental decision-making. Relying solely on Western legal systems and governments will thus achieve neither sustainability nor justice in the way the Anishinabek or other Indigenous peoples may require.

Expecting justice to be achieved in a context based on a Western-derived separation between humans and the rest of Creation that continues to support the current world economic order is not likely to generate an alternative path. This assertion certainly does not absolve governments of any of the responsibilities they currently hold with respect to injustice and achieving justice, but this system has been shown to be insufficient when it comes to achieving IEJ (as evidenced by the widespread opposition to mining, pipelines, tar sands, and fracking projects, to name a few).

Indigenous legal traditions reveal insights into Indigenous ontologies regarding human/nature relationships. Humans alone may not be the focus or even the architects of laws; the universe can be seen as having innate laws for governing itself in moral and appropriate ways. In this view, humans alone do not create law, nor in some cases are they responsible for enforcing law. This did not mean that laws were fixed: they could transform to reflect the challenges and moral questions of the day; they were also deliberative (Borrows 2016).

For Indigenous peoples, the ontology of relationships with all beings and entities in Creation means that “environmental decisions” include more than just considering the impact on the environment or nature (as a “thing” distinct from humans). The current dominant paradigm of “environment,” as codified in environmental protection laws, does not capture what is meant by “all our relations” or “a peopled cosmos.” The prevailing concept of “environment” is a cultural, social, and political construct and does not reflect the Indigenous worldview of Earth. The Anishinaabe Elder and traditional teacher James Dumont observes, “The Earth herself is a living, breathing, conscious being, complete with heart/feeling, soul/spirit, and physical and organic life, as it is with all the relatives of Creation” (2006: 12). In moving toward an Indigenous view, the question of how to “protect the environment” becomes one of how all of Creation’s entities will be affected by a decision that has implications for their well-being or their abilities to perform their duties. In this ontology of laws, Earth itself is related to as a living being and lawmaker. The Anishinabek knew, and continue to know, whom they were and how they related to everybody else in Creation through distinct ways of knowing. The Anishinabek also know whom the moon, sun, stars, waters, spirits, and ancestors are and how they ought to relate to them (through laws and codes of conduct).

As an aside, it is perhaps interesting to note that notions of “nonhuman agency” and Earth as a living being have emerged in Western thought, espoused by scholars such as James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis (1974) with their Gaia hypothesis—more recently discussed by Bruno Latour (2017)—and Philippe Descola’s (2006) ontological scheme of animism/totemism derived from ethnographic research. These and other authors have indeed generated scholarship that seeks to further advance Western understandings of the relation-

ships among humans, other beings, and Earth and in so doing remain firmly ensconced in their own Western ontologies. As Hunt simply states, “Investigations into western ontological possibilities are bounded in ways that limit their ability to fully account for Indigenous worldviews” (2014: 27). She continues, observing, “Indigenous knowledge is rarely seen as legitimate on its own terms, but must be negotiated in relation to the pre-established mode of inquiry” (29). As Hunt further notes, this is by no means a new phenomenon in conventional Western scholarship and, where it remains unchecked, leads to “epistemic violence and dominance” (see also Agyeman et al. 2009). The need thus remains for the development of critical Indigenous modes of inquiry and theorizing if we are to make progress in moving outside conventional Western modes of thinking.

It is important to state here that we should not essentialize Indigenous ways of knowing or legal traditions (Borrows 2016; Napoleon 2007). As Val Napoleon warns, “There is no room for romantic notions or idealism. Romanticism will not enable us to govern ourselves and relate to others on the power of our own ability to govern ourselves. We have to apply the same critical thought to our Indigenous legal orders and laws as we do to western law” (2007: 14). In other words, we must remain as intellectually rigorous as our ancestors did to ensure our collective survival.

## Indigenous Environmental Justice and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Numerous terms have been used to describe the knowledge of Indigenous peoples, including traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), traditional knowledge (TK), Indigenous knowledge (IK), and ethnoscience. This article uses Indigenous knowledge systems in recognition of the broader operational framework that generates, reproduces, transmits, and transforms Indigenous knowledges. The inclusion of “systems” in the title acknowledges the educational, historical, and legal structures that exist in Indigenous societies and that both give rise to knowledge and ensure its functionality and continuity. “Indigenous knowledge” is not merely a body of information but rather encompasses all those systems that create, analyze, maintain, apply, and transmit the knowledge. These systems of knowledge creation and embodiment have supported Indigenous nations for countless generations.

The term IKS also reflects the diversity of the many Indigenous nations and cultures in the world. It reflects, as well, Indigenous understandings of humanity’s relationships and responsibilities to the natural world and remains a central element of the conceptualizing of EJ. Much has been written over the past three decades on the value of Indigenous knowledge as a potentially important contributor to sustainable development. As part of this, IKS has formed an important part of international agreements and conventions.

The worldview underlying IKS of course differs from that of dominant Western understanding. This difference is epistemological in nature. The very nature of knowledge and understandings of how we come to know anything are seen quite differently in Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. Fundamental questions, such as “How do I know what is real?,” “Where does knowledge come from?,” “What is the nature of knowledge?,” “How do we generate knowledge?,” “How does it transform?,” “How do we know when we know it?,” and “What counts as knowledge?,” generate substantially contrasting answers when addressed from each of these worldviews.

The fact that IKS yield discrepant answers to those of Western knowledge systems doesn’t mean that IKS should continue to be scorned (in the knowledge-production framework within which universities, governments, and other agencies operate, IKS are often invisible, marginalized, unwelcome, and treated with hostility, if acknowledged at all). As we have seen, various international agencies have in fact called for a far more equitable

treatment of IKS, given that conventional Western systems have failed miserably in protecting our planet. How, then, do IKS support ethical, moral, and otherwise appropriate relationships with Earth and all its beings in a reenvisioned form of EJ?

As I have discussed, a major shift in approach to EJ arising from an IKS perspective is the vastly broadened understanding of who or what entities/beings are recipients and dispensers of justice. This understanding exists within a milieu of responsibilities based on mutual obligations and practice. Take the example of water justice. Ontologically, if water is a being, imbued with spirit and personality, then it is an entity that also deserves justice. In an Indigenous context, water is regarded as being fully alive (Craft 2014; Nelson 2013). “Water is not only understood to be alive in many Aboriginal cultures, but also sentient—having consciousness. Because it is ‘spirit,’ or carries spirit, water is capable of establishing relationships with other life forms” (Anderson et al. 2011: 14). What kinds of questions does Indigenous ontology raise about water and EJ? What does water justice look like? These questions again remind us of the limitations of conventional justice frameworks that seek to protect human (and Indigenous) rights yet continue to characterize other beings as resources, commodities, and private property.

Understanding water injustice from an Indigenous ontological and epistemological framework poses different questions and responses. An EJ framework based on IKS may reveal nuanced inequalities missed in conventional analysis. Further analysis from an IKS EJ framework reveals that Indigenous peoples are not just concerned about recognition of Indigenous and human *rights*, but also the ability to enact their *responsibilities* to the waters (as a relative). Furthermore, not only do people have rights and responsibilities in relation to water, but water also has responsibilities to peoples and other beings and entities in Creation that must also be fulfilled (Craft 2014; Lavalley 2006). If these reciprocal obligations and duties are enacted, then balance is achieved, and peoples and waters can continue their responsibilities. The responses then to environmental injustice can be framed in ways that extend environmental injustices to those experienced by the Earth itself. It is anticipated that applying an Indigenous EJ framework will bring forth more appropriate prescriptions than are currently in place or planned in Canada.

### ***Mino-Mnaamodzawin*: Achieving Indigenous Environmental Justice**

*Mino-mnaamodzawin* (sometimes spelled *minobimaatisiwin*), broadly speaking, can be understood as “living a good life” or “living well” and is considered the overriding goal of the Anishinabek, both individually and collectively. King (2013: 10) describes *mino-mnaamodzawin* as the “art of living well [which] forms the ideal that Anishinabek strive for.” Living well requires maintaining good and balanced relations with each other as humans and “other than human persons” (T. S. Smith 1995). Although the practice of living well existed for thousands of years before the devastating onslaught of colonial and oppressive forces that undermined Indigenous life in every conceivable way (TRC 2015), the concept has recently emerged as part of the revitalization of Indigenous healing systems. Initially, *mino-mnaamodzawin* found in expression primarily in the Indigenous health, social work, and education fields in Canada (Bell 2013) until LaDuke (1997) began applying it to environmental justice issues two decades ago. LaDuke pointed out that *minobimaatisiwin* (the spelling she uses) is a concept that is supported by Indigenous knowledge systems, legal orders, and in particular natural law.

“Bad” or inappropriate conduct (*madjijwe baziwin*) involved “the failure to keep up one side of a healthy relationship” (T. S. Smith 1995: 105). Causing imbalance in the world is regarded as dangerous and problematic. Injustice occurs when humans and other per-

sons are not able to fulfill their obligations toward maintaining balance. As noted earlier, it is important not to romanticize or essentialize a way of life; striving for and achieving *mino-mnaamodzawin* was not an easy task. It was and remains an ongoing process, and there are many paths to guide the pursuit of *mino-mnaamodzawin* (Borrows 2016).

Abuses of power and subsequent harm did (and still do) occur, and thus investment in learning how to relate in good ways was paramount in Anishinaabek life. In fact, Indigenous legal orders or laws, as Craft points out, were meant to “to allow for good relations and ultimately for each living being to have Mino-Mnaamodzawin (2014: 19, emphasis added). Theresa Smith adds, “No one can live well all alone” (1995: 62). We, as humans, rely on the knowledge and skills of others to live well in a balanced way.

*Mino-mnaamodzawin*, then, does not apply to humanity alone. Seeking redress or restitution for humans only for environmental abuses, violations, and destruction will not result in balanced relationships. All beings have the potential to realize *mino-mnaamodzawin*. The purpose is to sustain life for all “relations.” Moreover, the obligations to attain *mino-mnaamodzawin* are mutual, and other beings/entities have their own obligations and duties to perform. *Mino-mnaamodzawin* recognizes that other beings or entities in Creation also have their own laws (natural laws) that they must follow to ensure balance.

A commitment to *mino-mnaamodzawin* has the potential to reconfigure and reclaim appropriate relationships with other orders of beings. Reclaiming and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge systems and legal orders is of critical importance in supporting the vision of living well. It will be a process fraught with challenges, as dominant society will not happily embrace Indigenous knowledges and laws (at least not on the terms of Indigenous peoples). Yet, in order to move as a society toward a more positive future, it is vitally important that we undertake this process. Currently, we find ourselves in a situation where, as Napoleon observes, “Indigenous laws have been broken with no consequences (e.g., alienation of land and resources, violence, failed kinship obligations, etc.). When laws are broken with no recourse, the legal order begins to break down and this has been the experience of Indigenous peoples” (2007: 10). In short, the very foundations of the prevailing legal system, and dominant society itself, are standing on shaky ground due to the ongoing and often willful ignorance of natural laws. Through reconciliation among all peoples, including nonhuman “peoples,” this trend must be reversed.

To many, this may sound like a far-fetched notion, implying as it does such a profound rethinking and reordering of how we conduct our society and ourselves. However, it is heartening to see that the work has already begun. In New Zealand, for example, the Whanganui River is now officially recognized in the country’s legal system as having personhood and thus rights. The same is true for both the Ganga and Yamuna rivers in India. Acting on a grander scale, Bolivia has enacted a Law of the Rights of Mother Earth, and Indigenous peoples from across the globe have charted a renewed vision of sustainability that includes the concept of living well, or *vivir bien*, an idea that has regained prominence in Latin America (McGregor 2016). People from a variety of Places, then, are already implementing some desperately needed changes to existing paradigms. It seems only a matter of time, if we are to survive as a “peopled planet,” before such paradigm changes will become commonplace.

### Conclusion: Seeking Mino-Mnaamodzawin

The seismic shock of dispossession and violence that colonialism employed to gain entry into and claims over Indigenous lands around the globe in the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th centuries—this seismic shock kept rolling like a slinky—pressing and compacting

in different ways in different places as colonialism spread outwards into homelands of self-determining peoples around the globe. This worked to compact and speed up time, laying waste to legal orders, languages, place-story in quick succession. The fleshy, violent loss of 50 million Indigenous peoples in the Americas is something we read as a “quickenning” of space-time in a seismic sense. (David and Todd 2017: 772)

There are indeed significant challenges facing Indigenous peoples as they seek to “live well.” The world’s political and economic orders continue their onslaught of Earth, contributing at the same time to the undermining of Indigenous peoples’ very existence (Whyte 2017). Heather Davis and Zoe Todd argue that it makes sense to set the start date for humanity’s current ecologically disastrous trajectory as one that “coincides with colonialism in the Americas [as this] allows us to understand the current state of ecological crisis as inherently invested in a specific ideology defined by proto-capitalist logics based on extraction and accumulation through dispossession—logics that continue to shape the world we live in and that have produced our current era” (2017: 764). This situation characterizes the lived reality for Indigenous peoples, yet they “continue to work to foster and tend to strong relationships to humans, other-than-humans, and land today. Thus Indigenous resistance in the face of apocalypse, and the renewal and resurgence of Indigenous communities *in spite of* world-ending violence is something that Euro-Western thinkers should heed as we contend with the implications of the Imperial forces that set in motion the seismic upheaval of worlds back in 1492” (773). How can Indigenous legal orders and systems of knowledge influence the outcomes of such devastating and dominant ontologies?

Indigenous environmental justice, which can also be described as “living well with Earth,” has gained some prominence at the global scale because of sustained efforts by Indigenous peoples over decades. It is from these efforts that developments such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Bolivian Rights of Mother Earth, and international human rights frameworks flow. Albeit constrained by various factors, such efforts do offer openings for further advancing Indigenous self-determination and well-being (Lightfoot 2016). As noted earlier, the challenges are immense, yet Indigenous knowledges continue to inform alternative futures and “should be productively engaged to disrupt and undo these universalizing and violent logics” (David and Todd 2017: 675).

At the nationhood level, Anishinaabek legal orders have served and safeguarded the survival of the Anishinabek for thousands of years, yet these laws have also interacted with the legal orders of other nations, including historical and present-day treaty partners. Anishinaabek legal traditions, for example, were respected by the newcomers in the early diplomatic relationships that resulted in nation-to-nation treaties such as the 1764 Treaty of Niagara (Borrows 1997). Nation-to-nation relationships create space for the expression of Anishinaabek laws and justice that in turn contribute to equitable and just relationships with other nations.

The reality is that Indigenous nations and their livelihoods remain under sustained threat from colonialism, capitalism, industrialization, and globalization—a rather dystopian situation, as Whyte (2017) points out. David and Todd add, “In a deliberate manner, the processes of colonization severed relations, because it was through this severing that dispossession and integration could take place. Therefore, the genocide of the Americas was also a genocide of all manner of kin: animals and plants alike” (2017: 771). The challenges are severe, centuries old, and unrelenting. However, Indigenous peoples continue to assert alternative visions, for example, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, from the 2010 World People’s Conference on Climate Change and Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Indigenous peoples at the grassroots level require support in their efforts to imagine and seek alternative futures and facilitate their participation in matters of national and global

concern. The Anishinaabe concept of *mino-mnaamodzawin* is one expression of justice. While at a broad scale this concept can be said to be shared by many Indigenous peoples, at the detailed level there are as many visions of justice as there are Indigenous nations and societies, and their distinct legal, governance, and knowledge frameworks must be supported and afforded expression.

It is hoped that such interchange at all these levels and scales may result in innovative governance institutions and legal approaches, but this remains to be seen. As Whyte, as well as Davis and Todd, point out, it has taken more than five centuries to arrive at the place of reckoning we are at now, and it may well take as long to recover. What is sorely required to even envision alternative futures is to create space for Indigenous peoples to begin enacting a self-determined future so that they will again be empowered to inspire visions of living well with each other and with Earth.

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## CHAPTER 2

# Decolonizing Development in Diné Bı́keyah

## Resource Extraction, Anti-Capitalism, and Relational Futures

*Melanie K. Yazzie*

### Development, Decolonization, and National Liberation

With this article, I hope to make a significant contribution both to the traditions of Diné resistance that seek to carry Diné life into the future and to the careful scholarly work that has been produced about this resistance in the fields of anthropology and history.<sup>1</sup> I draw from the methods of Native American studies, an intellectual and political project that coalesced in the late 1960s at a time when Diné land defenders were also beginning to organize large-scale resistance to resource extraction. Native American studies is a diverse and prolific field that belongs to a much longer American Indian intellectual tradition with roots at the turn of the twentieth century, when Native thinkers like Sarah Winnemucca, Zitkála-Šá, Luther Standing Bear, and Charles Eastman began to formulate political, literary, and historical frameworks to capture and contest the new reality of permanent settler invasion that Native nations were confronting following the end of the nineteenth-century Indian Wars (Estes forthcoming; Warrior 1995). This tradition has maintained a persistent interest in generating research to challenge the waves of settler colonial dispossession and elimination that structure US-Indigenous relations (see Dunbar-Ortiz 2015).<sup>2</sup>

Paralleling the emergence of tribal self-determination within US legal history—a development that spelled the apparent end to federal termination policy—the institutionalization of Native American studies as an academic discipline in the early 1970s crystallized a resurgent conversation about Indian self-determination at a time when national

self-determination was captivating scholars and leaders across many parts of the newly decolonized Third World. Scholars turned their attention to researching and promoting self-determination, and historical actors like Diné activists and tribal politicians who were facing unprecedented incursion into Navajo lands from uranium and coal mining corporations were also drawn into this discourse. The anthropological and historical literature on Diné resistance has framed the emergence of this resistance in the 1970s in part through the lens of colonialism, self-determination, and decolonization. In his work on energy development, urban growth, and resource extraction in the postwar Southwestern United States, the award-winning historian Andrew Needham (2014) argues that competing definitions of Navajo nationalism in this era used the language of colonialism and decolonization to articulate their different approaches to the pressing concern of Navajo development. These political debates within the Navajo context reflected midcentury decolonization movements in the Third World that sought to articulate newly won national self-determination through the vehicle of economic independence at a time when the idea of “development” was also entering the political imaginaries of First World nations as a way to deal with newly independent, but apparently “underdeveloped,” Third World nations (Needham 2010; Powell 2017). Peter MacDonald’s ascendance to power as the famed Diné leader who developed a robust version of “decolonized” Navajo nationalism throughout the 1970s and 1980s by merging economic and political independence with extractive practices speaks to this convergence of international trends in decolonization and Navajo political history during this time.

However, Needham himself points out that this type of decolonization was precarious, for once “capital was fixed in place” through the infrastructure of energy development, “the possibility for systemic change faced significant limits” (2014: 17). In an article titled “The Role of Policy in American Indian Mineral Development,” the economist Lorraine Turner Ruffing makes a similar claim. Seeking to identify the “causes of reservation underdevelopment,” Ruffing concludes that the “single most important factor” in underdevelopment is the inability of tribes like the Navajo Nation to take control of energy production through nationalization (1980: 41, 47). Using a comparative framework in which she examines the relative bargaining power of Third World nations and tribal nations within the United States over their respective mineral wealth, Ruffing shows that nationalization in Third World countries creates more optimal conditions for control. Over time, she argues, transnational energy corporations lose their relative bargaining power after settling mineral leases with the governments of those countries. Conversely, for US-based tribal nations like the Navajo Nation, transnational energy corporations gain relative bargaining power after settling mineral leases with tribes, while tribal bargaining power decreases over time (45–47). Seeing bargaining power as evidence of control, she proposes that tribes articulate a form of sovereignty over natural resources that would allow them to have “complete control over these resources” by “retaining complete ownership over mineral wealth” (54).

Ruffing’s article appeared in a 1980 publication called *American Indian Energy Resources and Development*, the second in a series of widely cited studies on tribal economic development published by the Native American Studies program at the University of New Mexico. Situated near the eastern edge of the Navajo Nation, the program had close relationships with tribal leaders in the region, such as MacDonald, who by 1980 was in his tenth year as the Navajo Nation president and a powerful player in the newly formed Council of Energy Resource Tribes, which a 3 September 1979 article in *People* magazine claimed might have “the power to become a domestic OPEC” (Demaret 1979). It is thus no surprise that the historical, political, and material changes forming at the crossroads of Indigenous political and intellectual production in the region were deeply engaged with larger global discourses about energy development and underdevelopment, Third World politics, decolonization, and national liberation and self-determination.

I offer this brief historical sketch to make a larger point about decolonization and development. I put Needham's historical reflections on this period into conversation with Ruffing's historically situated deployment of these categories to situate decolonization within a contemporary Native American studies perspective on capitalism and settler colonialism that does not reproduce the conceptual bind of development/decolonization that emerged in the era in which Ruffing writes. Indeed, Needham implies that Navajo decolonization qua nationalism in the 1970s was effectually impossible once the "unequal regional connections" between the peripheral Navajo Nation and the metropolitan center of Phoenix became permanent (2014: 8). As Marxist scholars have pointed out for generations, this inequality is a structural feature of capitalism, which requires the reproduction of violent relations of domination and exploitation in order to facilitate the accumulation and concentration of profit in the hands of a small ruling class at the expense of a mass class of racialized and colonized poor (Wainwright 2008; White 1983). In the context of Navajo political and economic history, the inequalities inherent to capitalism have been explored by Marxist scholars through the discourse of development (and underdevelopment) and related concepts of core-periphery dependency like the one deployed by Needham above (Curley 2017; Needham 2014; White 1983). This framing of capitalism has become largely naturalized in scholarly writings about the Navajo context, so much so that the "perennial question of development" is the discursive terrain through which diverse social actors (and scholars) who are engaged in struggles over energy in the Navajo Nation have forged political and symbolic meaning about questions of identity, governance, temporality, ontology, and knowledge itself (Powell and Curley 2009: 110).

Yet, despite this prolific attention to development, the capitalist (and colonial and imperial) underpinnings of development seem to still fade into the background of these scholarly works in which development becomes the unquestioned fulcrum for understanding a whole range of Diné materialities and histories. Following Joel Wainwright, I suggest that we need to put the capitalism (and colonialism and imperialism) back into development. As Wainwright points out, development "emerged as a global alibi for the imperial extension of specifically Western modes of economy, spatiality and being. This event occurred when European colonial practices called for capitalism to take up its ontological attachment with development—essentially soliciting capitalism to become development" (2008: 13). This discursive convergence of capitalism with development occurred in the same postwar period when competing definitions of Navajo nationalism were emerging in conversation with Third World national liberation movements under the banner of "decolonization." Although development as a concept is a rather old "form of power" that precedes and exceeds the advent and reach of capital, in the postwar period it "became the central mission or justification for Third World states" to the extent that it was "universally taken up . . . to define and organize the nation-state-capital triad everywhere" (4, 12).

Needham, Powell, and Curley point out that the multiple political formations—including Diné resistance struggles—that were actively cohering during this period of Navajo history gained legibility primarily through the discourse and ontology of development. As a new universal, development achieved hegemonic status. Like other colonized nations, the Navajo Nation was incorporated into this hegemony of development, and the historical record that scholars of Navajo energy politics draw from demonstrates this quite unequivocally. But the point that Wainwright urges us to recognize is that this hegemonic incorporation was not actually about development (neither, I would add, were nascent forms of decolonization about development). Wainwright reminds us that the purpose and effect of the epistemic merging of capitalism with development—what he calls "the sublime absorption of capitalism into the concept of development"—was to extend capitalist social relations through the practice of development (12). In other words, capitalism—not development—

was the structure of power at work in these multiple political formations. Hegemony, after all, describes the means by which capitalist social relations come to govern life. As a hegemonic formation, development became a powerful new way to shape Diné life toward the interests of capital (112).

### The Priority of Anti-Capitalist Decolonization

As capitalism went to work through development, the emergent forms of decolonization that became equated with development integrated capitalism into the political mechanics of national and economic independence. This development-capitalism-decolonization triad has had devastating consequences for the Diné. Because capitalism as a structure of power has been neither dismantled nor fully interrogated by scholars and political actors, inequality and exploitation still dominate collective Navajo political horizons. And contemporary notions of Navajo self-determination, nationalism, and decolonization, which still seek sovereignty and national control through aspirations for development, continue to normalize what Needham calls “unequal geographies” of capitalist social relations “fixed in space” (2014: 245; Wainwright 2008: 8).<sup>3</sup>

Given the violence that structures and animates capitalist social relations, it is puzzling why certain scholars working at the burgeoning interdisciplinary crossroads of energy humanities, geology, and anthropology are so unclear about capitalism.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, capitalism is directly addressed in this literature, where it looms large in all discussions about resource extraction, Indigenous social movements, (neo)liberalism, environmentalism, globalization, and alternative futures.<sup>5</sup> However, there seems to be a separation between analytical interest and ethical-political commitments in these works. This is a sticking point where I think a differential Native American studies approach to decolonization matters, especially regarding Diné resistance. Most scholarship on Diné resistance rightfully contextualizes its history in the complex materialities conditioned by resource extraction. This scholarship mobilizes the language of social actors to develop neologisms and heuristics like “Navajo environmentalism,” “energy development,” “landscapes of power,” “Navajo nationalism,” “alternative energy,” “transition,” “energy politics,” “dependency,” “grassroots,” and “decolonization” to flesh out the dynamic and contested character of twentieth-century Diné politics (Curley 2017).

Within most of this literature, however, the language of anti-capitalist politics is either viewed with cool distance or rendered as only one vector that vies for dominance within a cacophony of discursive approaches and possibilities. At other times, anti-capitalist stances are dismissed or absent from the historical and ethnographic record altogether. Needham (2010, 2014) highlights how the Navajo nationalism of Diné youth activists during the 1970s drew from the same anticolonial and oppositional discourse (albeit with very different goals) that energized MacDonald’s version of Navajo nationalism. But he does not frame the politics of these activists as anti-capitalist. Instead, he argues, youth activists demanded an anticolonial nationalism of “nondevelopment,” which they saw as the only mechanism for preserving “supposedly transcendent” Navajo cultural and traditional values from destruction and “ruin”—in other words, death—by the colonial force of resource extraction (2010: 217, 222).<sup>6</sup> By reading the anticolonial politics of these “youth activists” primarily through their rhetorical usage of “culture” and “tradition,” Needham implies that their strident advocacy for nondevelopment was a form of politically motivated instrumentalism in which the preservation of tradition and culture formed the basis for advancing a political agenda opposed to MacDonald’s.

Nowhere, to my knowledge, does Needham frame the politics of Diné resistance during this period as anti-capitalist, and nowhere is development critiqued beyond the categories of colonialism, tradition, and nationalism. Is this because these youth activists were not engaged with Marxist or other anti-capitalist politics? Perhaps. But I argue that the critique of death, which Needham misinterprets as an instrumentalist use of cultural preservation by youth activists to frame their differential anticolonial nationalism, actually demonstrates an embodied and experiential critique of capitalism. While they may not have framed it in these terms, these Diné land defenders knew that development was just another vehicle for violence and destruction operating under the false pretense of a “gift,” which is how earlier forms of liberalism like democracy, progress, and growth were packaged for Native people (Jennifer Nez Denetdale, pers. comm., 2016). Their critique thus formed the fertile discursive grounds for a politics of refusal that clearly recognized the material inequalities, exploitation, and death inherent to a capitalist project masquerading as development (Simpson 2014). They rightfully and courageously refused to further naturalize the death drive of capitalism in Diné life by rejecting development and devising a variety of political and physical strategies to reinforce this opposition.

I will go into more detail about the specific dimensions of this opposition in my discussion of the work produced by John Redhouse, who was a key figure in Diné resistance struggles throughout the 1970s and 1980s. I would, however, like to turn first to the Diné land defenders of Redhouse’s generation who, in addition to their keen understanding of capitalism, had a clear, transparent analysis of colonialism, a fact that Needham details quite extensively in his treatment of these struggles in *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest*. In her economic study of Navajo underdevelopment, Ruffing (1980) also highlights colonialism as a factor that is affecting the ability of tribes to nationalize their mineral wealth and enforce sovereignty. Although Ruffing blames the lack of tribal control over mineral wealth on a lack of sovereignty and autonomy—a causal link that leads to her call for mechanisms to increase tribal sovereignty in her closing section on recommendations for tribal policies regarding energy development—she does not explain *why* tribal sovereignty and autonomy are perennially disempowered in the first place. The Marxist critiques of capitalism that I outlined earlier would certainly point to capitalist infrastructures like energy exploitation as the main cause for the general lack of tribal sovereignty and autonomy. Such infrastructures create and require unequal geographies characterized by uneven distribution. Harm, exploitation, and underdevelopment are distributed to tribal nations where resources are extracted, while benefits, power, and development are distributed to metropolitan centers like Phoenix where resources are converted for energy, as well as to the multinational corporations that dictate industry operations (Voyles 2015). The term “resource colonialism” emerged from this context to understand Navajo sovereignty as overdetermined by these relations of unequal development and distribution, which have made Navajo sovereignty almost permanently dependent on a resource economy based on exploitation (Curley 2017).

However, what Marxist frameworks do not account for is another kind of colonialism: settler colonialism. I take Ruffing’s conclusions about lack of tribal national control over political and economic destiny as evidence of social relations conditioned by both capitalism and settler colonialism. Indeed, the reason why decolonized Third World nations are more successful in exerting control over their mineral wealth against transnational energy corporations is because they have sovereignty that is more difficult to usurp because formal decolonization has taken place.<sup>7</sup> However, in the context of the United States, tribal nations have not achieved national liberation from colonial and imperial control by their occupying force and are therefore still colonized. As such, tribal nations like the Navajo

Nation cannot, ipso facto, be deemed “decolonized” (Cook-Lynn 2012). Indeed, the doctrine of congressional plenary power, even when not enforced as an unlimited and absolute power, vests the United States with total and final discretion to exercise jurisdiction over Native people and lands at any time (Cook-Lynn 2012; Wilkins and Stark 2011). Scholars have for decades dissected the manifold technologies by which the US nation-state has, throughout its entire history, labored to deny, defer, diminish, and outright terminate tribal sovereignty (Cook-Lynn 2012; Dunbar-Ortiz 2015). This has included the use of law, economic logics like development, popular culture, and academic knowledge to eliminate the prior political and territorial claims of Native nations that challenge US supremacy in these lands. Combined with the fact that US nationalism embraces capitalist accumulation as one of its primary expressions, US dominion over tribal destinies means that both capitalism and settler colonialism render the actual independence of the Navajo Nation all but impossible.

Because of the fundamental negation of tribal sovereignty that these two systems of power require, it is important for scholars to address both systems—in a transparent, direct, and critical manner—when analyzing and researching Indigenous politics. Moreover, the significant conceptual and material differences between resource colonialism and settler colonialism demonstrate the need for scholars to pay closer attention to the ways in which development operates as a modality of capitalism *and* settler colonialism, and to attend to the complex and interlocking relationalities that exist between different forms of resource colonialism, capitalism, and settler colonialism that are at work in any given historical or material context. I find Curley’s work to be an important step in this direction. In this work, he (2016, 2017a, 2017b) critiques Navajo political actors, including tribal politicians, nonprofits, and grassroots activists, for reproducing liberal and capitalist logics of development in their advocacy for the Navajo Nation to begin a “green transition” toward alternative energy development.<sup>8</sup>

What is at stake in this shift within the academic literature is actual, achievable Indigenous self-determination, which has been the centerpiece of American Indian intellectual traditions, including Native American studies, since their inception. Because of the entrenched inequalities and violences created by resource and settler colonialism—something that I imagine none of the scholars who write about Diné energy politics would contest—Diné self-determination would effectively require the demise of both the United States and of global capitalism for national liberation to be possible. And because of the hegemonic status that development holds within Diné life, it seems like a good starting point is for Diné people to reject current logics of development, thereby “awakening from the slumber of hegemony” and denaturalizing the ontological hold of development in everyday life and politics (Smith 2012: 211). This rejection would facilitate and foster a larger movement that could succeed at decolonization for Diné and, indeed, for all life. This vision of decolonization, premised as it is on a politics of Diné life in its entirety, is the focus on the next section of this article.

However, there are challenges. As I noted earlier, current scholars treat anti-capitalist positions with cool distance, ambivalence, and even dismissal. Colleen O’Neill, a labor historian who has also written widely about Navajo development, has claimed that calling for a “ban” on energy development (meaning, taking a nondevelopment or anti-capitalist stance) is a “trap” that pits Navajo environmentalists against labor activists (2010: 141). As Powell and Curley (2009) point out, it is certainly true that differential perspectives on development form the discursive nexus of conflict, possibility, ontology, and knowledge within the context of Diné politics. But claiming that nondevelopment is a “trap,” or advocating for “profit-seeking ventures” like Dana Powell and Dáilan J. Long do in their discussion of Navajo renewable energy activism, minimizes not only the structural violence that creates

these conditions in the first place, but also the traditions of anti-capitalist decolonization that have played a prominent role in Diné resistance since the incorporation of Diné life into capitalism and settler colonialism began (2010: 254).

Indeed, this anti-capitalist decolonization is alive and strong in current Diné resistance struggles, as well as in American Indian intellectual traditions and Indigenous political imaginaries more broadly.<sup>9</sup> Scholars of these struggles must take the oppositional politics of anti-capitalist decolonization seriously, not just for how they shape histories of power and struggle, but also for the alternative futures they envision and demand. This is where a Native American studies project of decolonization is not only useful but necessary for envisioning an Indigenous politics of engagement and futurity. Like Diné anti-capitalists, Native American studies scholars have historically been dismissed by scholars and politicians for being too essentialist, totalizing, or polemical in their refusals and rejections of settler colonial domination over Indigenous lives and lands. I encourage the knowledge producers, decision makers, and historical actors invested in Diné futures to set these misconceptions aside and join in the project of anti-capitalist decolonization, one that accepts nothing less than conditions of vibrant futurity in which life in its entirety is able to thrive free from the violence of empire. Indeed, I hope to have shown that these futures require imagination and sweeping vision. Our decolonial aspirations are not just about sovereignty and exerting independence over energy development; they are about challenging the very capitalist notion of development that works in tandem with the structure of settler colonialism to reproduce and secure Diné death. Our politics of anti-capitalist decolonization must thus not only act as a form of resistance to the death drive of capitalism and settler colonialism, but also function as a vehicle for imagining a politics of life that will refuse death and instead secure a future for all our relations.

### Toward a Diné Politics of Life

As I have argued elsewhere, struggles over life and death continue to shape the persistent refusal on the part of Diné grassroots people to acknowledge and accept the violence of liberal development ideologies (Yazzie 2016). However, this differential politics of life has its roots in earlier periods of Diné history. As Peter Iverson notes, for Diné people, “the sweeping program of livestock reduction [in the 1930s] caused massive trauma within the Navajo world” (2002: 137). Marilyn Help, a Diné elder, expanded on this claim in a 2001 interview with Iverson:

I think my people really got hurt by the livestock reduction program because they are really close to their animals. . . . Our people cried. My people, they cried. They thought this act was another Hwééldi, Long Walk. They asked the government, “Why are you doing this to us. . . . You gave the animals for us to use, and now you are turning around and killing our livestock.

Another Diné woman relayed the story of her husband’s death, which she directly linked to livestock reduction:

My husband said, “You people are . . . heartless. You have now killed me. You have cut off my arms. You have cut off my legs. You have taken my head off. There is nothing left for me.” It wasn’t long before my husband fell ill . . . and at the beginning of spring he died.” (quoted in Iverson 2002: 137)

These words, from the mouths of Diné women who remembered the impact of livestock reduction on their everyday lives, tell a story of death and catastrophe that stands in stark



contrast to the story of life and triumph proffered by the prevailing discourse of progress that dominated the liberalism of that era.

Indeed, for Diné people, livestock reduction did not represent a failure to take their cultural views seriously. This view was extended by John Collier, the main architect of livestock reduction, to explain widespread Navajo discontent with the program (Yazzie 2016). Rather, they viewed it as an assault on their entire way of life, which had happened previously when the Long Walk of the Navajo, or Hwéeldi, had threatened the total elimination of Diné life.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore from Diné people themselves, both those in the 1960s and 1970s who define themselves as activists, and community members like Marilyn Help who have interpreted livestock reduction from within an ordinary politics of Diné life, that I draw my argument regarding the politics of death underwriting the increased normalization of liberal modalities in everyday Diné life and governance. Moreover, I argue that the salience of this politics of death across various periods of Diné history spanning from Hwéeldi to what John Redhouse has termed the “dark period of the fossil fuel age” of the 1960s and 1970s helps to explain the comprehensive discourses of life that have served as the centerpiece of various iterations of grassroots Diné political action since the 1930s (2014: 83).

Through his voluminous research in the 1970s and 1980s, Redhouse uncovered a vast network of connections between multinational resource extraction corporations, tribal governments, US politicians, and other actors that extended through and beyond tribal lands and boundaries. He concluded that the extraction of resources on Navajoland was linked to a larger system of extraction, exploitation, and profiteering characterized by what he called “a grand plan” for the colonization of Navajos (2014: 82). He frequently employed this framework in his writings to trace connections between different forms of violence in locations like Black Mesa, Farmington, and Gallup, where the logic of extraction had transformed everyday social relations into a war over life and death. In Redhouse’s mind, what was occurring through murderous violence and racism in industry-driven border towns had everything to do with the extraction of life happening through mining, forced removal, and disease in rural parts of the Navajo reservation where industry operations had also set up shop. Both locations were geopolitical coordinates connected through an economic network of extractive practices that were destroying the land, killing sheep, killing people, uprooting families from their homes, and alienating people from their entire way of life. Pauline Whitesinger, a Big Mountain matriarch who was prominent in the struggle on Black Mesa to resist forced relocation in the 1970s and 1980s, likened this network of extractive practices to “putting your hand down someone’s throat and squeezing the heart out” (2011: 75). In a particularly striking passage from his self-published memoir *Getting It Out of My System*, Redhouse describes this economic network and the visceral and violent terms of death that extractive economic practices were imposing on the Diné, even as tribal politicians increasingly opened up Diné lands and bodies to service economic deals with resource extraction corporations:

I grew up in Farmington in the 1950s and 1960s. It was a typical bordertown, racist as hell. . . . There were the usual local rednecks. . . . They didn’t like Indians but they liked our money. . . . And then came the boomers, the white oilfield trash from Texas and Oklahoma, who were as dangerous as they looked. They hated Blacks in TX and OK but since there were very few Negroes and a whole lot of Indians in the new Energy Capital of the West, we, the local Indians, became their [target]. The energy boom of the 50s and 60s brought the boomers and that’s when Indian killing became a regular sport in Farmington. They would kill you just because you were Indian. So [we] grew up fighting during that particularly violent period. We had to fight back to survive. . . . and while we were fighting for our lives, we realized the supreme irony that most of the energy that made Farmington a boomtown came from the nearby. . . . Indian reservations. And

that much of the water in the rivers which flowed through our tribal lands were used for regional energy development which benefited not only the area boomers but large off-reservation, non-Indian populations in big cities. . . . Oh my god, we were a colony, an exploited energy and water resource colony of the master race. The colonialism was by design. The exploitation was part of a grand plan. And we in the bordertown ghettos were fighting the sons of the colonizers and exploiters who had set up shop and were running their resource raids out of Farmington. We the indigenous people of this land were being screwed—coming and going (2014: 82).

In this lengthy passage, Redhouse draws material connections between the violent culture of Indian killing in border towns like Farmington and the resource raids like coal and uranium mining occurring in other parts of the Navajo Nation, the profits of which literally fed border town economies and thus directly fueled Indian killing. For Redhouse (1985), extractive practices trafficked in Indian killing on multiple levels, including murder, harassment, exploitation, the plunder of water, and, as he would later argue, forced relocation and the rape of land.

Redhouse frames the multiple modalities of death and violence at the heart of extraction in a strikingly similar way to Indigenous feminists writing about extraction more than 30 years later. In partnership with the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN), the Women's Earth Alliance (WEA) released a report that documents what it calls environmental violence. Environmental violence entails "the disproportionate and often devastating impacts that the conscious and deliberate proliferation of environmental toxins and industrial development (including extraction, production, export and release) have on Indigenous women, children and future generations, without regard from States or corporations for their severe and ongoing harm" (WEA and NYSHN 2016: 15). The report cites more than a dozen Indigenous feminist land defenders who draw from their autobiographical experiences as Indigenous women, as well as their activism and advocacy regarding sexual violence and resource extraction, to argue that resource extraction is fundamentally violent. These Indigenous feminist land defenders also point out that the violence of resource extraction affects not only the lands that are plundered and pillaged during resource raids (to borrow Redhouse's term), but also the bodies of Indigenous people—and women, youth, and LGBTQ relatives in particular. This land/body relationality is bound by and through an intergenerational toxicity caused by industrial pollution, often as a result of resource extraction. The land/body relationality that these Indigenous feminist land defenders uncover as central to environmental violence echoes the connections between Indian killing and resource raids, which occur at the respective sites of body and land, that Redhouse draws from his own frontline experience as a Diné land defender in the 1970s and 1980s. The structural portrait that Redhouse, WEA, and NYSHN paint is one of violence and death.

In addition to having roots in Marxist critiques of capitalism, my critique of the violence that underpins development comes directly from Indigenous feminist and Diné land defenders who draw connections between the everyday lived material realities of environmental violence and larger structures of colonialism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy. These connections are key for understanding the politics of life espoused by Big Mountain matriarchs like Whitesinger and Ruth Benally that emerged to contest these material realities of environmental violence and death masquerading as liberal promises of development, life, and growth.<sup>11</sup> The Guatemalan activist Sandra Moran provides a framework that is useful for interpreting this politics. She writes, "Women resist because they defend life. The extractive model kills life, impedes it, transforms it. The defense of life is in the center of resistance and as women we have always been at the center of taking care of life" (quoted in WEA and NYSHN 2014: 12). In the following passage, Benally suggests something similar

when she claims that the Diné have a right to live freely on the land in Big Mountain and other parts of Black Mesa because they have a deep relationship with the land, one that infuses their sense of self and their entire understanding of reality:

Náaná dibédó' dooda danihijiní nidi nihí éi dibéhígí t'áá deiyínít'a' . . . T'áá níléi háádéé' shíí t'áá éi téi bee hiniináá lágo baa ákódaniidzjì. Dáákèh dó. Éi nanise' niljnígí naadáá niljínii t'óó ahayóigóó choo'ì bi tadidíin hóló. Éi hostóí nahalaí yee nahalá. Éi biniinaago éiyá doo beediyii'nahda nihi dáákèh naaznilóó. Yéego éi nihikéi át'éego éi baa nitsídikees nihikéyahígí. Háalá éi bikáá' neidái. Biniinaa áádoo át'éhígóó "Dooda" nihí'dínínígí éi doo ákwíiniidzinda. Doo hakého la' ániit'éedadoo niidzin (2011: 54, 58).<sup>12</sup>

Roman Bitsuie and Kenja Hassan echo this understanding:

Navajos' obligations to the earth, to their family, and community is their purpose in life. All of these things that are important to them spiral back to the land itself. The land is the center of their orientation in experience and the base of their sense of reality and identity, to separate them from it would cause them to lose contact with all that is sacred and holy to them. To force people to live such a life of meaninglessness is . . . a condemnation to a slow death. (2011: 94).

As these two passages imply, the land-based paradigm that emerged from the context of these women's resistance to forced removal had, at its center, both an unwavering critique of the almost totalizing death that extractive practices represented to Diné worldviews and a framework for Diné conceptions of life rooted in one's relationship with the land and responsibilities to life-giving forces and beings like sheep, corn, family, and holy beings. As Benally points out, this relationality comprises the Diné worldview and orients an ontology that exists always in relation to or in kinship with an entire web of relations that have specific connections to specific places. In other words, through the act of resisting forced removal, these women enacted a politics of life that was both defensive (as in to defend life against the destruction of extraction) and generative (as in to caretake life through an ethos and practice of kinship obligation).

This dual move of defending and caretaking relational life is at the heart of the Diné concept of *k'é*, which is still widely practiced as a social and ontological custom in both Diné resistance struggles and in everyday Diné life. I argue that his turn toward life has energized and shaped the now-popular phrases "Mni Wiconi" and "Tó Éí Iná At'é," or "Water Is Life," that have become a signature for Indigenous struggles like the stunning effort to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline in Standing Rock and the lesser-known but momentous Nihigaal Bee Iná effort, which was a walk across the Navajo Nation led by Diné women and youth in 2015 "to document both the beauty of land and people and how this is being desecrated by resource extraction" (IAM 2015). As it has been invoked within Indigenous resistance struggles, "Water Is Life" represents a set of assumptions and values that represent a radical departure from those that drive liberal determinations of life that have actually brought harm and death to the Diné and other Indigenous peoples (Yazzie and Baldy forthcoming). These assumptions and values are premised on an embracement of relationality in which the responsibility of being a good relative to all of one's relatives, including other-than-human relatives like land, plants, water, animals, and ancestors, becomes the priority and basis for political organization and action.

Like WEA and NYSHN, Indigenous women and those who are writing and organizing within the framework of Indigenous feminism have articulated the most comprehensive theory of this relationality. Winona LaDuke, for example, has argued that "Native American teachings describe the relations all around—animals, fish, trees, and rocks—as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas. Our relations to each other, our prayers whispered across

generations to our relatives, are what bind our cultures together” (1999: 2). And Indigenous feminists like Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2002) and Mishuana Goeman (2017: 101) have long emphasized that Indigenous feminist praxis offers a “scale based on connection” that collapses “the settler scale that separates humans, lands, animals.”<sup>13</sup> These Indigenous feminists articulate a theory of connection in which relationality and movement define ontology rather than the bounded individualism that functions as the organizing principle for (violent) liberal, capitalist, and settler colonial modalities of time and space.

In his edited volume *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute*, Malcolm Benally documents oral histories of resistance relayed by Big Mountain matriarchs, including the two I quoted earlier, Ruth Benally and Pauline Whitesinger. *Bitter Water* includes a chapter entitled “Sheep Is Life” (or Dibé Bee Iiná) in which editor Benally weaves together these women’s definitions of the phrase “Sheep Is Life” (2011: 62–84). Like the values underlying the phrase “Water Is Life,” “Sheep Is Life” offers a similar theory of politics premised on a definition of life rooted in a philosophy and practice of relationality. Donna Haraway, who writes about human-sheep relationality on Black Mesa, argues that the interconnection between Diné women and sheep offers fertile ground for “cultivating a multispecies justice” (2016: 3). Notions like “Sheep Is Life” demonstrate what Haraway calls a “symposium,” or the “making-with” that characterizes the “complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems” of kinship and materiality (58). The question of justice, what some who write and organize about resource extraction call “alternative futures,” has been a central concern of the post-humanist ethics that Haraway has contributed to academic knowledge about relationality (Jalbert et al. 2017). As one of the primary scholarly threads feeding the emerging project of energy humanities, post-humanism urges scholars and historical actors to develop theories and methods that address the “necessity of constituting new worldviews and modes of action appropriate to the recognition of ecological interdependency and interresponsibility” (Boyer 2017: 191). Although it is important to point out that neither Haraway nor any scholar working in post-humanist traditions is offering any new insight into relationality that has not already been expertly theorized and practiced by Diné and other Indigenous peoples since before the advent of American academic institutions, I see the work emerging from the interdisciplinary crossroads of energy humanities, post-humanism, queer affect, and Indigenous feminism as a sign that intellectuals writing from both the front lines of Indigenous resistance and academic positions are formulating a politics of relational life that can serve as a form of multispecies justice, which Whitesinger, Benally, Goeman, Moreton-Robinson, LaDuke, Redhouse, Haraway, and Mohan all point to as a critical and necessary framework for liberating all life from the death grip of the hegemonic formation of “extractivism” and its liberal, capitalist, heteropatriarchal, and settler colonial valance of development (Jalbert et al. 2017b: 6).<sup>14</sup>

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**NOTES**

1. For a comprehensive literature review of this literature, see Curley (2017a); Sherry (2002).
2. For an introduction to decolonization in the field of Native American and Indigenous studies, see Riding In and Miller (2011). See also L. T. Smith (2012) and the various articles and blog posts published in the open access journal *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*. For a foundational treatment of settler colonialism, see Wolfe (2006).
3. Andrew Curley (2017a, 2018) has recently published two excellent critiques of development within the context of Navajo energy politics. These are, to my knowledge, the only critical scholarly works about this topic that currently exist. Another study that examines development in relation to capitalism in the Navajo context focuses on the period that directly precedes the energy boom of the 1970s is Weiss (1984).
4. In a piece published just last year, for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2017) claims that the scientific revelation of the Anthropocene challenges received scholarly wisdom that capitalism is the sole (or primary) culprit of global warming and catastrophic climate change.
5. Published in early 2017, the massive *Energy Humanities: An Anthology* (Szeman and Boyer 2017) provides a rich and diverse collection of scholars and approaches writing about this topic.
6. Most scholarship that details the harm inflicted on Diné people by resource extraction is about the destructive legacies of large-scale uranium mining on the Navajo Nation. There are several excellent studies about this that I draw from to frame my larger argument about the politics of death that liberal development qua resource extraction brought to Diné existence (see Brugge et al. 2006; Montoya 2016; Voyles 2015). I also draw from Rob Nixon's (2011) notion of "slow violence" to frame my discussion of the ontologies of death (and the political contestations that emerge from these ontologies) that are normalized through resource extraction.
7. Scholars of postcolonial studies have pointed out that coloniality is a persistent structure of power that continues to reproduce global relations of domination/oppression and wealth/disposability in decolonized contexts (what is more commonly known as the distinction between the Global North and the Global South), a point that cannot be glossed over (see Mignolo 2000). An excellent source that includes other important writers within the postcolonial tradition is Ashcroft et al. (2006).
8. Several examples of this kind of scholarship address capitalism, colonialism, and Indigenous politics outside of the Navajo context. In *Resource Rebels*, Al Gedicks (2002: 15) argues that Indigenous challenges to resource extraction in numerous locations around the globe have erupted in response to the restructuring of capitalism under neoliberalism (often called globalization), which created new "resource frontiers" for multinational corporations to exploit. Anna Tsing (2005: 11) also examines the relationship between Indigenous uprisings, environmentalism, and capitalism in *Friction*, in which she argues that "the spread of capitalism has been violent, chaotic, and divisive, rather than smoothly all-encompassing," as scholars and advocates of globalization would like us to believe.
9. Current examples of Diné-led anti-capitalist decolonization struggles include the Taala Hooghan Infoshop in Flagstaff, Arizona; the K'é Infoshop in Window Rock, Arizona; and the Red Nation in Albuquerque and Gallup, New Mexico.
10. Indeed, the following statement made by Pauline Whitesinger in the late 1990s regarding the forced relocation of Diné families on Black Mesa provides a view of liberal development qua extraction as an assault on Navajos' entire way of life: "The reason we will not relocate is because the land has become a part of us. . . . We have to resist. We carry a béesh yistògi, an arrowhead, and a keet'áan yálti, a Talking Prayer bundle. And there are ways of life like Dibéshchíin: Sheep is life. There are many ceremonies that have a way of life. To leave the sacred mountains with these teachings would be a great loss. So we are speaking out. . . . This is how we think. This is why we did not sign our names. The sacred places are all we have" (2011: 47, 48, 50). In this passage, Whitesinger frames resistance to relocation as the defense of a sacred way of life—a way of understanding and being in the world—that is inextricably bound to land, sheep, and ceremony. Grassroots political actors have repeatedly articulated these themes of life—land, sheep, and ceremony—throughout Navajo history to characterize political engagements like resistance to forced relocation on Black Mesa. Phrases like "way of life," "lifeways," "sheep is life," and "water

is life,” all of which are commonly used by Diné people when speaking of the meaning and importance of Diné approaches to existing in harmony with the land, are not, however, just cultural or epistemological phenomena. The concepts of “life” mobilized by interlocutors like Ruth Benally, Marilyn Help, Roberta Blackgoat, Mae Tso, and Pauline Whitesinger in the process of active resistance to liberal development agendas like resource extraction invoke a relationship with the world that is simultaneously cultural, spiritual, epistemological, and political. The historic circulation of these notions of life within the realm of political theater, which itself is a history that arose because of the stranglehold that ideologies of liberal development have come to exert on everyday Navajo life, makes them a form of politics preoccupied with the preservation of certain modes of Diné life and living in the face of violence and death.

11. The Diné sheepherding community of Big Mountain is located in the northern part of Navajo-Hopi partitioned land (also known as the Joint Use Area or Bennett Freeze) on Black Mesa, a large region within the Navajo Nation. Big Mountain is an internationally known geopolitical site of Indigenous struggle that has also been the beating heart of Diné resistance to forced relocation for more than 40 years. For more on resistance at Big Mountain, see Benally (2011); Brugge (1999); Florio and Mudd (1985); Redhouse (1985); Wilkinson (1999).
12. This passage is translated by Malcolm Benally in *Bitter Water* as: “The law says that sheep are not allowed here, but we hold on to them . . . We learned how to live by taking care of the livestock. It is like the cornfield. There are many ways to prepare corn and use the pollen. The pollen is used by healers in the Blessing Way ceremony. So that we never lose the memory of a cornfield we have a natural kinship that is woven into the land. It is how we walk on the land. That is why even when we are told, ‘No,’ we have to resist. We do not want to live in any other way.”
13. I also draw from Nick Estes’s (forthcoming) work on relationality.
14. Extractivism is the “ideological mindset” of “pillage” that underlies the actual removal of resources for capitalist and imperialist interests (see Jalbert et al. 2017: 6).

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## CHAPTER 3

# Fighting Invasive Infrastructures

## Indigenous Relations against Pipelines

*Anne Spice*

Critical infrastructure refers to processes, systems, facilities, technologies, networks, assets and services essential to the health, safety, security or economic well-being of Canadians and the effective functioning of government. . . . Disruptions of critical infrastructure could result in catastrophic loss of life, adverse economic effects and significant harm to public confidence. (PSC 2018)

In Unist'ot'en territory in northern British Columbia, Canada, clan members of the Wet'suwet'en people have built a permanent encampment in the pathway of numerous potential and proposed pipelines. In response to the characterization of these pipeline projects as "critical infrastructure," the camp's spokesperson, Freda Huson, notes that the pipelines were proposed to run through the clan's best berry patches. By resisting pipeline construction, she explains, "what we're doing here is protecting *our* critical infrastructure." The language game of the response inverts the promise and inevitability of settler infrastructures but does not replace it with a network that works within the same epistemological and ontological relations to land and kin. When I asked Freda to describe the difference between industry conceptions of critical infrastructure, and the infrastructures that sustain Indigenous life on Unist'ot'en *yintah* (territory), she told me this:

So industry and government always talk about critical infrastructure, and *their critical infrastructure is making money, and using destructive projects to make that money, and they go by any means necessary to make that happen. . . . So for us, our critical infrastructure is the clean drinking water, and the very water that the salmon spawn in, and*

they go back downstream and four years, come back. That salmon is our food source; it's our main staple food. That's one of our critical infrastructures. And there's berries that are our critical infrastructure, because the berries not only feed us, they also feed the bears, and the salmon also don't just feed us, they feed the bears. And each and every one of those are all connected, and without each other, we wouldn't survive on this planet. . . . For example, the bears will eat the berries and they'll drop it, and the waste that comes out of the bear, it's got seeds in it, so that germinates and we get more berries. We need the bears in order to keep producing our berries, and same with the salmon. The bears eat the salmon as well, because once the salmon spawn, they end up dying anyways, and that becomes food for the bears, so it's not being wasted. All of that is part of the system that our people depend on, and *that whole cycle and system is our critical infrastructure*, and that's what we're trying to protect, an infrastructure that we depend on. And industry and government are pushing these projects that would destroy that critical infrastructure, most important to our people. (emphasis added)

Here, Freda appropriates the term “critical infrastructure” to index the interconnected networks of human and other-than-human beings that sustain Indigenous life in mutual relation. This network stands in stark contrast to the critical infrastructures of government and industry—infrastructures that are meant to destroy Indigenous life to make way for capitalist expansion. By contrasting these two meanings under one term, she brings attention to the underlying driving force of industrial infrastructure, exposing the lie that these projects are creative/productive and instead insisting that they are regressive/destructive and embedded in a capitalist system that is fundamentally at odds with the cycles and systems that make Indigenous survival possible.

### Infrastructure vis-à-vis Settler Colonialism

How, then, can an anthropology of infrastructure address the radical vision of Indigenous resistance to settler infrastructures? In a 2013 review article in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Brian Larkin defines infrastructures as:

built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space. As physical forms they shape the nature of a network, the speed and direction of its movement, its temporalities, and its vulnerability to breakdown. They comprise the architecture for circulation, literally providing the undergirding of modern societies, and they generate the ambient environment of everyday life. (2013: 328)

Larkin advocates for a systems analysis of infrastructures, and stresses that infrastructures are networks that cannot always be reduced to the technologies or materials that make them up: “infrastructures are matter that enable the movement of other matter . . . they are things and also the relation between things” (329). As such, infrastructures “create the grounds” of operation for other objects. Looking at infrastructures as systems, Larkin argues, allows us to attend to how the definition of an assemblage as infrastructure works to categorize the world. This act of definition “comprises a cultural analytic that highlights the epistemological and political commitments involved in selecting what one sees as infrastructural (and thus causal) and what one leaves out” (230). As the Canadian government’s definition of “critical infrastructure” above makes clear, these political commitments may come into conflict, as infrastructures are proposed across territories that Indigenous peoples have never surrendered to the Canadian state. This article links literature in the anthropology of infrastructure, settler colonial studies, and critical Indigenous studies to understand the emergence of “critical infrastructure” as a settler colonial technology of governance and appropriation in lands now claimed by Canada.

An anthropology attentive to settler colonial power relations must consider not only “our” analytic categories (as anthropologists) but also the categories that wield and carry the authority (and violence) of the settler state. The government mobilizes the language of “critical infrastructure” to transform oil and gas infrastructures from industry projects into crucial matters of national interest. That authority is buoyed further by the genealogy of the concept of infrastructure itself, which Larkin shows is the genealogical descendant of Enlightenment ideas about modernity and progress. While the categorization of oil and gas technologies as “critical infrastructure” is a relatively recent move, the discursive positioning of infrastructure as a gateway to a modern future has been used in state-building projects around the world for some time now. The conflict over oil and gas infrastructures, however, is more than a disagreement about what “counts” as infrastructure and what does not. Embedded in Larkin’s definition of infrastructure is a tacit assumption that infrastructures, as “things and also the relation between things,” are inanimate, are not alive. Freda Huson calls attention to the salmon, the berries, and the bears that form “our critical infrastructure.” This living network is not an assemblage of “things and relation between things,” but rather a set of relations and things between relations. These are relations that require caretaking, which Indigenous peoples are accountable to. And they are relations that are built through the agency of not only humans but also other-than-human kin. The bears and salmon create and maintain the assemblage as much as (or more than) humans do. Infrastructure, then, attempts but fails to capture the agentive and social network through which Indigenous life is produced.<sup>1</sup> These assemblages exist whether or not they are framed or captured by anthropological theory.

The comparison between oil and gas infrastructures and Indigenous assemblages, however, helps to illuminate how the binaries of civilized/savage and culture/nature continue to operate within anthropological theory to code the built environment of “modern societies” as a mark of progress and a space of political reckoning while obscuring the Indigenous relations these infrastructures attempt to replace. If the infrastructural is what is seen as causal, and if the definition of the infrastructural does not capture Indigenous assemblages that sustain life, then what do we make of the causal force of other-than-human relations (the water, the bears, the berries, the salmon)? Put another way, how do Indigenous peoples mobilize relational systems—or how are Indigenous peoples mobilized by commitments to these systems—against oil and gas infrastructures when these are naturalized as the “ambient environment of everyday life?” To answer these questions, I make two central assertions. First, the characterization of oil and gas pipelines as “critical infrastructures” constitutes a form of settler colonial invasion, and second, Indigenous resistance to oil and gas infrastructures, through suspension, disruption, and blockages, protect our relations against the violence of settler colonial invasion, and open alternatives for living in good relation to our territories. I address each assertion by turning to a set of field insights followed by an engagement with relevant literatures in settler colonial studies and the anthropology of infrastructure.

### **Field Insights: Critical Infrastructure**

I visited Unist’ot’en Camp for the first time in the summer of 2015. I responded to the people’s call for support on the ground after increased industry pressure and police presence threatened to breach the borders of their territory and begin construction of pipelines on their land. The atmosphere at the camp was tense, in part because the stakes of participation in Indigenous resistance to pipelines were both raised and unclear. For the first few days, I sat by the fire alone, feeling the distrust and fear in the gaze of the Indigenous peoples gathered. In a matter of weeks, these people would grow to be my dearest friends,

but in those first tense and heated days, they could not afford to trust a stranger. In May of that year, the Canadian legislature had passed Bill C-51 (House of Commons of Canada 2015), which redefined “activity that undermines the security of Canada” as “any activity . . . if it undermines the sovereignty, security, or territorial integrity of Canada or the lives or the security of the people of Canada.” Activities explicitly listed include “interference with the capacity of The Government of Canada in relation to intelligence, defense, border operations, public safety, the administration of justice, diplomatic or consular relations, or the economic or financial stability of Canada,” “terrorism,” and “interference with critical infrastructure.” An emergent category for the governance of crisis, critical infrastructure is defined by the Canadian government as the “processes, systems, facilities, technologies, networks, assets and services essential to the health, safety, security or economic well-being of Canadians and the effective functioning of the government” (PSC 2009: 2). The United States operates under a similar definition of critical infrastructure as “systems and assets, whether physical or virtual, so vital to the United States that the incapacity or destruction of such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination of those matters” (WHOPS 2013). Canada and the United States also coordinate to protect and maintain cross-border critical infrastructures, which facilitate the flow of goods, capital, and people between the two countries. Because the discourse of critical infrastructure is tightly linked to one of “national security,” as well as “economic well-being,” there is discursive and legal space open for an understanding of oil and gas pipelines as critical infrastructure because of the economic reliance of both the United States and Canada on revenue from fossil fuels. Threats to pipeline projects, then, can be cast as threats to national (economic) security, and these definitions of critical infrastructure make it possible to place resistance to fossil fuels in the same category as domestic terrorism. Even though the reoccupation of traditional territory at Unist’otèn Camp has always been peaceful, in 2015 supporters worried that they could be cast as terrorists simply by helping the Unist’otèn people to reestablish a home on the territory for which they have cared for thousands of years.

This concern was amplified by the apparent coordination between oil and gas industry personnel and police. Supporters on their way to Unist’otèn Camp were surveilled; police checkpoints stopped cars on the logging road and issued tickets for broken taillights and cracked windshields. In between police visits meant to intimidate supporters, industry executives attempted to “negotiate” entry onto Unist’otèn territory. These tactics mirrored the industry-police collaboration that was made clear in a leaked report from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Critical Infrastructure Intelligence Assessment Team entitled *Criminal Threats to the Canadian Petroleum Industry*. The report’s key findings draw attention to “a growing, highly organized and well-financed, anti-Canadian petroleum movement, that consists of peaceful activists, militants and violent extremists, who are opposed to society’s reliance on fossil fuels,” and the capacity of “violent anti-petroleum extremists” to “engage in criminal activity to promote their anti-petroleum ideology” (RCMP 2014:1). The report’s dismissal of environmental concerns with climate change and environmental destruction as “anti-petroleum ideology” is matched with an uncritical ventriloquism of industry statements and concerns. The report is particularly concerned with “violent aboriginal [*sic*] extremists,” and their ability to garner wide national and international support for actions against oil and gas incursions into Indigenous territories. An unmarked binary operates throughout the report: privatized oil and gas technologies and pipelines are “critical infrastructures” in need of increased securitization and protection, while protection of Indigenous lands and ecologies is extremist ideology.

In the lands now occupied by Canada, the state’s approach to Indigenous protest has shifted under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government, which has fully embraced

the politics of recognition with its accompanying reconciliation pageantry. On National Aboriginal Day in 2016, the Trudeau administration released a statement on the government's approach to Indigenous peoples, saying: "No relationship is more important to our government and to Canada than the one with Indigenous peoples. Today, we reaffirm our government's commitment to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples, one based on the recognition of rights, respect, trust, co-operation, and partnership" (PMO 2016). Despite these statements of "recognition," Indigenous peoples remain in a deeply subordinated relationship to Canada, and political claims to land and self-governance are repeatedly squashed in favor of cultural exchange (Coulthard 2014, A. Simpson 2014). The prime minister's statement of recognition itself embodies this by reciting the language of a nation-to-nation relationship as the route to reconciliation but ending with the facile suggestion that reconciliation can be practiced by Canadians reading more books by Indigenous authors: "I invite you to join the #IndigenousReads campaign to help raise awareness and understanding through shared culture and stories and encourage steps toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples" (PMO 2016).

While the government shifts the focus to "shared culture and stories" and away from Indigenous claims to land and sovereignty, oil and gas infrastructures have continued to operate as emblems of national progress and resource wealth. Resource extraction is coded as "critical" to national well-being and is normalized as unavoidable common sense. While the veneer of cooperation and negotiation has thickened under Trudeau, the underlying approach to the oil and gas industry has remained consistent with past governments. In the Speech from the Throne presented by Stephen Harper's government in 2013, the Government of Canada highlighted the role of resource extraction in Canada's future: "Canada's energy reserves are vast—sufficient to fuel our growing economy and supply international customers for generations to come. . . . A lack of key infrastructure threatens to strand these resources at a time when global demand for Canadian energy is soaring. . . . Canada's natural wealth is our national inheritance" (LOP 2013). In a continuation of this approach to oil and gas, Trudeau gave the keynote speech to a meeting of oil and gas executives in Houston, Texas, noting, "No country would find 173 billion barrels of oil in the ground and just leave them there" (Berke 2017). His speech was met with a standing ovation. The naturalization of oil and gas extraction and the securitization of pipelines as "critical infrastructures" serve to link industry profits to national security, criminalizing Indigenous dissent and recasting destructive infrastructure projects as natural outgrowths of the settler state. Given the use of the term "critical infrastructure" to legitimize extractive projects that have not received the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous nations guaranteed under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNGA 2008), the intersections between official state definitions of "infrastructure" and the tactics and technologies of settler colonialism merit further explanation.

### **Invasive Infrastructures**

This article takes up Patrick Wolfe's (2006: 388) assertion that settler colonial "invasion is a structure not an event" and turns to one of invasion's contemporary material forms: oil and gas infrastructure. In North America, the expansion of oil and gas networks is tightly linked to the continued displacement, pacification, and expropriation of unceded and treaty-guaranteed lands historically inhabited and cared for by Indigenous peoples. Pipelines, like other modern infrastructures, are not events, but they are eventful: rooted in a settler future, they enable a material transit of empire (Byrd 2011), and this movement is hailed as an inevitable and necessary pathway to progress. Pipelines become a key link between

the expropriation of Indigenous homelands and industrial expansion, environmental crisis, and imperialist war. Oil and gas flow out of occupied Indigenous territories and fuel the maintenance of environmentally and socially devastating ways of life. Despite this imperial “transit,” settler state discourse imagines “critical infrastructures” as assemblages that serve the Canadian public, need protection, and reimagine the social good in terms of the aggregate economy (Mitchell 2011; Murphy 2017). Yet as Unist’otēn spokesperson Freda Huson makes clear, Indigenous resistance to “critical infrastructures” contests the very category of infrastructure itself, asserting alternative ontological and epistemological modes of relating to assemblages that move matter and sustain life.

As the “undergirding of modern societies” (Larkin 2013), critical infrastructures are infrastructures of invasion. By facilitating capitalist exchange, reproducing and encouraging new forms of white land ownership, and cementing settler ontologies that naturalize the existence and domination of the nation-state, colonial dispossession travels through infrastructures, as they are used to extend settlements’ reach into Indigenous territories that remain unceded, unsundered to the Canadian state, or protected under treaty agreements with Indigenous nations. The settler state is built through a network of infrastructures, which must be normalized and maintained to assert settler jurisdiction toward nation-building projects (Pasternak 2014).

Infrastructures that transport people have been identified as formations of settler colonization. The railroads that facilitated westward expansion onto Indigenous territories in Canada and the United States were deeply colonial projects that required the labor of Chinese immigrants and the displacement of Indigenous peoples in order to build capital and deliver settlers to the West (Day 2016). Manu Vimalassery describes how the land grants underwriting the Central Pacific Railroad link the assertion of settler sovereignty to underlying Indigenous claims to land; the practice of “counter-sovereignty” in this case uses railroad infrastructure to both build on and replace preexisting Indigenous sovereignties to shape and expand colonial geographies (2014: 88). Other transportation infrastructures operate this way as well. As Penny Harvey and Hannah Knox (2015) make clear in their book *Roads: An Anthropology of Infrastructure and Expertise*, roads and highways are fully entangled in politics at both the micro and macro levels. Madhuri Karak (2016) uses the case of Odisha, India, to trace how roads are used to aid counterinsurgency efforts to remove guerrillas and facilitate land grabbing. The association of roads with military presence led local people to take paths, avoiding the shiny asphalt highway even if this was an added inconvenience. And as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz notes, the extensive roadways used by North American Native peoples as trade routes before colonization have been paved over, forming the major highways of the United States and obscuring the mobility and presence of Native peoples, both historically and presently (2014: 28–30). Thus, in crucial ways, the concept of modern infrastructure elides the supposedly “nonmodern” assemblages of Indigenous peoples that were transformed into settler property and infrastructure. Settlers acquired their “modernity” as infrastructures facilitated dispossession while disavowing their roots in Indigenous organizations of space. If settler colonialism is a structure that “destroys to replace” (Wolfe 2006), then transportation infrastructures are themselves settler colonial technologies of invasion.

These transportation infrastructures intersect with oil and gas projects, as both are increasingly grouped under the definition of critical infrastructures secured by the state in Canada and the United States. Furthermore, the danger of transporting oil by rail is often used to argue for the construction of “safer” pipelines, ironically acknowledging the possibility of the railroads creating contamination, death, and disaster (as if they didn’t cause these things from their inception), while pushing oil pipelines as further incursions onto Indigenous territories in the name of “public safety” (Wilt 2017). Since the very beginning

of the settler colonial project in North America, infrastructures have been sites of contact, violence, tension, and competing jurisdiction. Deborah Cowen (2017) emphasizes not only the temporality of infrastructures that reach toward aspirations of their completion but also their entanglement with the past:

Infrastructures reach across time, building uneven relations of the past into the future, cementing their persistence. In colonial and settler colonial contexts, infrastructure is often the means of dispossession, and the material force that implants colonial economies and socialities. Infrastructures thus highlight the issue of competing and overlapping jurisdiction—matters of both time and space.

The infrastructures that support oil and gas development form a network of completed and proposed projects that are embedded in the national imaginaries of settler colonies while also reaching beyond international borders. They enable the material transit of energy, as well as the ideological claims of settler sovereignty over Indigenous territory.<sup>2</sup> In the case of Unist'ot'en Camp, pipelines currently proposed through the unceded territories of the Wet'suwet'en nation in northern British Columbia, Canada, rely on fracking fields to the northeast and on the construction of liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facilities on the coast. The controversial proposed Keystone XL pipeline would transport oil from the Athabasca tar sands across the US border to meet up with existing pipelines in Nebraska. Michael Watts (2015) has referred to this network as an "oil assemblage," and anthropologists have attended to the material and political consequences of oil as it travels through these networks (Rogers 2015). In the case of Indigenous resistance to oil and gas assemblages, these pipeline infrastructures also carry the work of jurisdiction and the assertion of political claims to territory and resources. Proposed pipelines assume and assert settler jurisdiction over the unceded Wet'suwet'en territories in British Columbia in order to usher in prosperity for the Canadian public, and they do so in concert with transportation infrastructures. When police approached the border of Unist'ot'en territory in 2015, they told us that our actions were not allowed because we were blocking a "public highway" (a logging road). Hence, the language of infrastructure is used to delegitimize Indigenous claims to territory by replacing them with allusions to the legality of "public" access. The extraction of oil and gas is normalized, and the petro-economy invades Native lands in the name of the settler public, extending the net of economic relations reliant on oil and gas and making it harder and harder to imagine and live into relations outside of capitalism.

As Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015) has pointed out, settler nation-states are steeped in "possessive logics" that dispossess Indigenous nations both historically and presently through the enduring reproduction of white possession. Material infrastructures such as the buildings, roads, pipes, wires, and cables that make up cities are built alongside and on top of Indigenous sovereignties. These sovereignties, Moreton-Robinson insists, still exist but are "disavowed through the materiality of these significations, which are perceived as evidence of ownership by those who have taken possession" (2015: xiii). Indigenous peoples who are resisting the infrastructures of oil and gas recognize the power of a pipeline to reinscribe white possession on their territories.

These are also infrastructures of white supremacy. For the Unist'ot'en clan of the Wet'suwet'en nation, resistance to the construction of pipelines in their territory is resistance to the invasion of the Canadian state onto territories that they have never ceded or surrendered to the province or the crown. Unist'ot'en people regularly remind visitors to their land that it is not Canada, it is not British Columbia: it is unceded Wet'suwet'en territory. Oil and gas companies, on the other hand, publicize their projects by hailing settler publics through possessive investment in Indigenous territories as a pathway to prosperous settler futures. Oil and gas extraction and infrastructure reproduces the settler state, not only through the

dispossession of Indigenous peoples but also through the generation, maintenance, reproduction, and naturalization of settler ontologies. In the case of pipelines, the land through which pipelines are built is not owned by oil and gas companies but drawn into the oil and gas assemblage as a form of white dominion: Indigenous sovereignty stands in the way of oil and gas infrastructures by asserting a prior jurisdiction over territory. While oil and gas companies strive to present their projects as just another national infrastructure—Trans-Canada’s (2017) Coastal Gaslink pipeline is even pitched as a boon to other infrastructures: “Annual property tax revenues generated from the project can also help build important infrastructure that we rely on every day like roads, schools and hospitals”—white possession continues to naturalize projects that cut through Indigenous territories in service of the national interest.

As Indigenous feminist scholars continue to remind us, the work of white possession in settler states traffic in patriarchal notions of ownership and property that have implications for ways of relating beyond heteropatriarchal settler normativity (Arvin et al. 2013; Barker 2017; Goeman 2013; Hall 2009). Reclaiming relations beyond invasive infrastructures means acknowledging the violence done by prioritizing technical and technological infrastructure as the work of national progress. The settler state shapes narratives around infrastructure projects that make them out to be a part of the natural advancement of the nation-state while masking the violence they cause to Indigenous land and bodies, especially the bodies of women and girls (Dhillon 2015; Jensen 2017; A. Simpson 2016; L. Simpson 2017). Oil and gas extraction, in particular, creates spaces of unchecked white masculinity in which incidents of violent abduction, abuse, and rape of Indigenous women and girls have skyrocketed (Gibson et al. 2017; Jensen 2017; WEA and NYSHN 2016). Attention to alternatives would recognize the work done by generations of women and Two-Spirit people to protect and maintain the assemblages that sustain Indigenous life in the face of settler colonial invasion<sup>3</sup>—work that the Dakota scholar Kim TallBear (2016) calls caretaking relations. In spaces of land defense and Indigenous resistance across Canada and the United States, women have led movements to protect the land and water and to reinvigorate alternatives to infrastructures threatening destruction of land and Indigenous ways of life (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014).

### Anthropology of Infrastructure

Infrastructure is by definition future oriented; it is assembled in the service of worlds to come. Infrastructure demands a focus on what underpins and enables formations of power and the material organization of everyday life in time and space. Cowen (2017) offers an expansive definition of infrastructures as “the collectively constructed systems that also build and sustain human life,” and terms the alternatives to state systems “fugitive infrastructures.” While fugitive infrastructure may not be an obvious place to start, anthropology must break from the reification of infrastructure’s stated purpose and imposed coherence. Fugitivity calls our attention to the ways in which time, space, and the material world are organized by power yet constantly disrupted and remade. An analysis that dwells in “fugitivity” attends to that which can be gleaned from spaces of power (Moten and Harney 2013).

With Cowen’s frame of “fugitive infrastructures,” we can draw attention to the material, social, and economic networks that flourish in the space opened by industry pressure and the threat of environmental devastation. The concept of “fugitivity,” however, has temporal and theoretical limitations in relation to Indigenous movements. While Indigenous movements may disrupt settler infrastructures and the capitalist relations they sustain, these movements are not transitory, fleeting, or temporary (Spice 2016). Furthermore,



Indigenous peoples are not fugitives “on the run” from settler governance. Instead, resistance to invasive infrastructures requires standing in place, in our territories, and insisting on our prior and continuing relationships to the lands, kin, and other-than-human relations that those infrastructures threaten. Indigenous blockades, checkpoints, and encampments slow and disrupt flows of extractive capital and the ideological project of settler sovereignty while also strengthening alternative relations that tend to the matter beyond what is usually considered the “built environment.” As such, these are not simply spaces of negation (as the oft-repeated phrase “no pipelines” might suggest), but also spaces of radical possibility under Indigenous leadership and jurisdiction—possibility that is deeply threatening to the continued operation of the capitalist settler state.

As Larkin (2013) notes, the Enlightenment underpinnings of “infrastructure” root the term in the building of modern futures. Indigenous blockades of “critical infrastructures” disrupt the reproduction of settler futures through assertion of Indigenous jurisdiction, placing the settler future in suspension. Shiri Pasternak and Tia Dafnos describe how blockades trigger state securitization: “Simply put, Indigenous peoples interrupt commodity flows by asserting jurisdiction and sovereignty over their lands and resources in places that form choke points to the circulation of capital. Thus, the securitization of ‘critical infrastructure’—essentially supply chains of capital, such as private pipelines and public transport routes—has become a priority in mitigating the potential threat of Indigenous jurisdiction” (2017: 3). Pasternak and Dafnos draw attention to the particular circuitry of oil and gas infrastructures in the global system of capitalist “just in time” production. The attention to systems, here, considers the materiality of oil and pipelines but insists that the pipeline infrastructure be understood within the particular networks of circulation it enables. When the Canadian state steps in to protect “critical infrastructures” by securitizing risk, we might ask, “Critical to what and whom?” What subjects and publics are hailed into infrastructure projects, and how are they reproduced?

Managing “critical infrastructures,” then, is primarily about colonial governance. Pasternak and Dafnos argue that this shift in governing strategies has positioned industry and corporations as partners in national security, marking Indigenous jurisdiction as a “risk” to be mitigated. This shift in governance reinscribes settler colonial dispossession through the legal and material network built to support pipeline infrastructure. Movements to block critical infrastructures, such as those enacted across the country during the Idle No More movement (the “Native winter” of 2012–2013), highlight the ability of dispersed Native nations to significantly alter the circulation of capital by shutting down highways, bridges, and railroads. By participating in the politics of blockades, Indigenous activists are correctly identifying the reliance of the petro-state on energy infrastructure and forcing open the contradiction between proposed and presumed energy infrastructure on stolen land.

The naturalization of resource extraction projects alongside the suspension of Indigenous life through settler infrastructure projects combine to mask the ways in which the language of infrastructure itself can work to legitimize “modern” assemblages like pipelines while rendering invisible the living assemblages that would strengthen Indigenous sovereignty and lifeways. If, following Larkin, we turn to “what one sees as infrastructural (and thus causal) and what one leaves out” as a window into state aspirations and intentions, the Canadian context of oil and gas extraction returns the following conclusion: in the eyes of the Canadian state, oil and gas pipelines count as infrastructural, while the relations of rivers, glaciers, lakes, mountains, plants and animals and Indigenous nations are the natural resources to be modernized as commodities or subjects. Here, Larkin’s note that infrastructures “literally provid[e] the undergirding of modern societies” (2013: 328) raises a crucial question. If those modern societies have settled, colonized, and attempted to eliminate existing Indigenous nations and political orders, does the word infrastructure

itself denote an apparatus of domination?<sup>4</sup> Here, the very act of defining infrastructures as tools of the state takes for granted the state's ontological claims. "What one leaves out" of the definition of infrastructure is a world of relations, flows, and circulations that the settler state has attempted to destroy and supplant.

Many scholars have connected infrastructures to state promises of modernity, progress, and nationhood (Bear 2007; Coronil 1997; Ferry and Limbert 2008; Gledhill 2008; Mrazek 2002). The promise of oil, Fernando Coronil (1997) explains, allows the state to perform all kinds of "magic"; Andrew Apter (2005) explores this magic through the dramaturgy and spectacle underlying oil and the mirage of progress in Nigeria. Oil infrastructures in particular also produce spectacular forms of breakdown. As Susan Leigh Star (1999) notes, infrastructures often become "visible upon breakdown" (382). The Deepwater Horizon and Exxon Valdez oil spills bring the particular materiality of infrastructures (a "leak" in an oil rig, the crash of a tanker) into high relief. But the focus on breakdown reinforces a slippage between actually existing and future infrastructures—a slippage that is both enforced by oil and gas companies who operate as if pipelines are already built and therefore inevitable and by environmental activists who operate on the assumption that the pipeline *will* break (they always break). But what of infrastructures that do not yet exist? How might spaces of anticipation, spaces slated as "energy corridors," work as transit to capitalist petro-futures? And how might these futures be disrupted?

While anthropological definitions of infrastructure carry the political weight of state and industry projects, they have also made space to investigate the affective, social, and temporal aspects of infrastructure. Akhil Gupta (2015) compels anthropologists to look to the temporality, not only the spatiality, of infrastructure. Gupta explains that infrastructure can illuminate social futures, since state infrastructure projects are often long-term investments. Infrastructures "tell us a great deal about aspirations, anticipations, and imaginations of the future . . . what people think their society should be like, what they might wish it to be, and what kind of statement the government wants to make about that vision." Gupta's attention to temporality can also help to articulate how visions of the future within a nation are fractured and competing. If we refuse the idea that there is one unified "society" (and the attendant epistemological and ontological claims of what "society" is vis-à-vis the state, nature, morality, and technology) for whom infrastructures are meant to function, we may start to see how infrastructures materialize temporal logics.

Pipelines, then, become an inevitable harbinger of social progress, and they are proposed across territories as if they are already bringing the benefits of their completion. The temporality of infrastructure construction further brings with it reorganizations of experience. The new socialities and relations formed through infrastructures are themselves worthy of study. AbdouMaliq Simone's concept of "people as infrastructure" explains that attempts to govern through the built environment or to separate distinct populations through networks of services often fail; Simone pays attention to the actually existing material and social networks on the ground in inner-city Johannesburg, South Africa, noting that "the growing distance between how urban Africans actually live and normative trajectories of urbanization and public life can constitute new fields of economic action" (2004: 428). In the suspension, failure, or rupture of government intentions to govern through infrastructure, other social and temporal worlds develop.

Governments intending to extend settler colonial control over Indigenous lands through pipeline construction face the continued resistance of Indigenous peoples, forcing oil and gas projects to linger for years between proposal and completion. Gupta (2015) characterizes this state of suspension: "Suspension, then, instead of being a temporary phase between the start of a project and its (successful) conclusion, needs to be theorized as its own condition of being. The temporality of suspension is not between past and future, between

beginning and end, but constitutes its own ontic condition just as surely as does completion.” For many Indigenous peoples, the completion of pipelines includes the inevitable spill, the environmental catastrophe, the destruction of ways of life. Holding projects in suspension, then, is a key tactic of Indigenous resistance.

Indigenous feminist perspectives, however, point to how suspension also characterizes Indigenous life under settler occupation. As the Southern Paiute anthropologist Kristen Simmons (2017) explains, “suspension is a condition of settler colonialism—it suffuses all places, and keeps in play the contradictions and ambiguities built into the colonial project.” Simmons explains how settler colonialism creates an atmosphere of violence, through both the suspension of toxic chemicals in the air, and the ways in which these suspensions create the “normal” conditions of Indigenous life. Settler colonialism preys on our porosity and vulnerability to toxicity; it wears on our health and bodies while chemically altering our atmospheres. Simmons theorizes this combination of chemical suspension and the suspension of Indigenous life as “settler atmospheric.” The normalization of settler colonial violence is accomplished through shifts in our atmosphere and discursive regimes. Here we can also look to Traci Voyles’s (2015) Indigenous feminist-informed *Wastelanding*; Voyles shows how the discourses about land in the Southwestern United States shape settler colonial violence: the land is cast as already wasted, allowing the continued settler appropriation of resources and reckless contamination of land and water. The settler accumulation of energy, capital, and territory is reliant on the parallel distribution of toxicity and violence to Indigenous nations, and forms of immediate state violence (like the militarized response to Standing Rock Indian Reservation water protectors) are tied to the slow environmental destruction of Indigenous homelands (Montoya 2016).

The uneven distribution of infrastructures also draws attention to who is seen as part of a society worth reproducing and who is not. Recall Harper and Trudeau advertising the future of Canada through pipelines and energy infrastructures while minimizing the threats to Indigenous sovereignty and the environment required to complete these state-building projects. The effects are dramatic abandonments and exclusions from the social benefits promised by modernity’s infrastructures in order to secure resource extraction. As Tess Lea and Paul Pholeros (2010) point out in the settler state of Australia, outward appearance of infrastructure can be deceiving. In their discussion of state provision of housing for Aboriginal people in Australia, they document the systematic disrepair, incompleteness, and poor design of Aboriginal housing. Houses provided for Aboriginal families may look like houses, but they are not. Their pipes lead to nowhere and are constructed with cheap and crumbling materials. These “not-houses” draw attention to the way in which infrastructure can, through its pull to the literal, mask the material conditions lurking just underneath the surface. Infrastructures in settler states like Australia, the United States, and Canada keep Indigenous nations in suspension as a condition of settler colonial expansion and extraction, while infrastructures of resource extraction roll in with government approval and corporate money.

Larkin, Gupta, and Lea and Pholeros emphasize the temporality of infrastructure, and the contingent link between proposed infrastructure projects and their materialization. Like many infrastructures that are subject to state investment, oil and gas infrastructures are aspirational. They anticipate the circulation of certain materials, the proliferation of certain worlds, the reproduction of certain subjects. But, sometimes, their bluster hides their tenuous nature, and their future focus creates an opening in which other possibilities can assert themselves. While Trudeau has heralded his government’s approval of two major pipeline projects, another was canceled after many years of Indigenous resistance and a lack of proper consultation with Indigenous peoples (Tasker 2016). If Indigenous resistance forces pipeline projects into suspension, futures might grow in the space between proposal

and completion (a space that, if Indigenous land defenders have their way, leads to the reversal of settler colonialism).

### Field Insights: Relations against Pipelines

Before heading out to Unist'ot'en Camp for the second time (in 2016), I drove a rusting Toyota truck up to the Yukon territory, following my parents along the Alaska Highway and stopping to camp along the way. My mother grew up in Whitehorse, Yukon, and left home to go to school in Alberta when she was 18. We were going up to attend a memorial service for her cousin, a man who she says was like her brother growing up. We were also going to meet and meet my family.

I was nervous. Having grown up on Treaty 7 territories in southern Alberta, I felt like an interloper and outsider. The day after we arrived in Whitehorse, my auntie had a barbecue for family. Put the word out, expected a handful of people. Suddenly, the house was full. Dozens of people, all related to me. All my relations. I sat outside with a moose burger in hand, talking to a maybe-cousin of mine. "So," he says, "how are we related?" Um, I don't know. "Someone told me you're an anthropologist?" Yeah, you could say that. "Uh . . . shouldn't you know?" He convinces me to make a kinship chart. I find a piece of paper and sit down on the deck. People gather around, and I map out our relations. A giant, sprawling tree. Over the next week, I go over the chart, adding in forgotten relatives, piecing it together. When I see my relatives in the streets of Whitehorse, they ask me how my anthropology project is going. They introduce me to others: "This is Anne, she's an anthropologist, you're cousins." I am unquestionably part of this family. Here it is, on paper in front of me. Here it is, in the way I am addressed: Lee's daughter. Lori's niece. All of us are descendants of my great-grandmother Jenny LeBarge, though we can now trace the tree back further, back a few more generations to ancestors whose names are all Tlingit or Southern Tutchone, not the names of the places the colonizers found them. Our family name—LeBarge—is a misspelled tribute to Lake Laberge, which was named for a French-Canadian explorer. So we're named for a place that was named for a white man—not that there weren't names for us, or the lake for that matter, before all that. The lake: Tà'a'an Mān, Southern Tutchone; Kluk-tas-si, Tagish; Tahini-wud, Tlingit. And my people weren't even really from there; we migrated in from the coast of Alaska. White explorers were lazy historians.

After a week in Whitehorse, in the area that my people called Kwanlin (Southern Tutchone for "water running through a narrow place"—the Yukon River running through Miles Canyon), I drive down through the neighboring territories of Tagish, Kaska Dena, Tahltan, Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en. Arriving on Unist'ot'en yintah, I am exhausted and reeling. I arrive in the midst of preparations for a northern Indigenous youth art camp and busy myself with preparing food, helping to lead activities, and making the youth feel welcome and supported in that space. During the final week of the camp, after a trip out berry picking with all the youth, we get a moose. After it is shot, we run up to where it fell. I see its breath stop. All the youth gather around to help skin and gut it, and I work to do this myself for the first time.

After we get the moose and get back to camp, after the moose is tucked into the smokehouse, after all the youth are in bed and everyone else is sleeping or out watching the northern lights, I reflect on what this means for me as a neighbor of the Wet'suwet'en people. Skinning the moose, I've never felt so sure that I was in the right place. Here, on the territories of others, my ancestors are teaching me. That moose is my relation; this land is my responsibility. Much of my time left at camp is taken up with the work of butchering the moose with an Indigenous (but not Wet'suwet'en) friend. I feel entirely bound up in my

responsibilities to the moose, and when a bowl of moose meat spoils after we give it to some supporters to pressure can, I am sick with sadness and anger. Next time, we tell each other, we won't let this happen. This is when I realize I have wholly committed myself to a "next time," and the pull back to the land is so strong that when I arrive in NYC I am ill for weeks, heartsick as my connection to both territory and people wears under the strain of distance, the fast-paced crunch of capitalist time, the pressing need for me to make my "summer research" legible and theoretical and fundable.

It has become clear to me that spaces like Unist'ot'en Camp are doing more than blocking pipelines. The work of undoing settler colonial invasion requires blocking, resisting, and suspending the infrastructures of oil and gas and the systemic dominance of capitalism. It also requires attending to and caring for the networks of relations that make Indigenous survival possible. These are the relations that linked my nation to the Wet'suwet'en people before our territories felt the first footsteps of white settlers. These are the relations that bring Indigenous youth back onto the land and into material relation with the other-than-human beings that share their territories. These are the relations that connect me to other Indigenous peoples as we struggle to regain ancestral skills that we have lost. These are the Indigenous assemblages that recognize our dependence on other-than-humans for our survival as peoples. These are the relations threatened by invasive infrastructures and their toxic consequences. If the moose, the berry patches, the salmon, and the bears are destroyed, then so are we.

Stephen Collier and Andrew Lakoff (2008) detail how "critical infrastructures" in the United States became objects of national security as events threatening infrastructures over the course of the twentieth century were increasingly understood as threats to "vital systems" supporting the collective life of the United States. In both Canada and the United States, these systems are sometimes threatened by the jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples, whose land forms the conditions of possibility for collective life on this continent. When Indigenous land defenders point to "our critical infrastructures," they are pointing to another set of relations that sustains the collective life of Indigenous peoples: the human and non-human networks that have supported Indigenous polities on this continent for tens of thousands of years. Indigenous peoples reject the idea that the way of life supported by pipeline infrastructure should be accelerated or intensified, and instead step into the vulnerable and volatile space between the proposal and potential completion of pipelines to protect the land, water, air, plant, and animal relations instead. By doing so, they attend to the "vital systems" that form alternatives to capitalist exploitation, alternatives to oil-soaked futures, alternatives to the unquestioned occupation of the settler state.

By performatively "seeing like an oil company" (Ferguson 2005), land defenders appropriate the language of infrastructure to question the terms of industrial invasion onto their territories. And by building alternatives based on Indigenous relations of ethics and care in the aspirational space of proposed pipeline routes, encampments like Unist'ot'en Camp challenge the destructive teleology of settler petro-futures. At Unist'ot'en Camp, the hosts remind visitors, "this is not Canada, this is not British Columbia: this is unceded Wet'suwet'en territory." If the space of the camp is not Canada today, then perhaps it is an opening into a more reciprocal Indigenous tomorrow, beyond the perpetual incursions of settler colonial domination. Yet an analysis of how these futures are anticipated and brought into existence is only possible if we center Indigenous feminist methodologies that work against the inevitability of settler modernity and make room for the resurgent infrastructures that sustain human and other-than-human relations. We must critically analyze the tactics and strategies of colonial domination while strengthening our relations. We can do this by supporting spaces of resistance like Unist'ot'en Camp, by holding each other accountable for the relationship-building work that underlies everything we do. We can challenge the inevita-

bility of settler colonial invasion by returning to the networks that have sustained us for tens of thousands of years on our territories and by living into better relations with each other and our other-than-human kin. We pick the berries, skin the moose, protect the water. We feed *our* critical infrastructures, in hopes that they will flourish again.

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#### ■ NOTES

1. These productive networks are better described by Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2017) concept "infrastructures of feeling." Asking how structures of feeling are produced and relations rearranged, she suggests that the Black radical tradition and other revolutionary knowledges are formed and maintained through connections that arc toward freedom and challenge the structures of racial capitalism.
2. For an excellent report on the political context of pipeline infrastructures and their claims to Indigenous territories, see Mazer (2017).
3. The emerging *Voices: Indigenous Women on the Frontlines Speak* project compiles Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people's stories in a book and zine series. For more information, see <http://voicesbook.tumblr.com/about>.
4. *Gunalchéesh* (thank you) to a reviewer for pointing out that this is also true of the word "sovereignty." For a discussion of Indigenous appropriations of sovereignty, see Barker (2006, 2017).

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## CHAPTER 4

# Unsettling the Land

## Indigeneity, Ontology, and Hybridity in Settler Colonialism

*Paul Berne Burow, Samara Brock, and Michael R. Dove*

What are the stakes of different ontologies of land in settler colonialism and Indigenous movements for decolonization and environmental justice? Settler colonialism describes a structure of exogenous domination in which Indigenous inhabitants of a territory are displaced by an outside population from an imperial center (Veracini 2010). Patrick Wolfe, in his classic formulation of the settler colonial situation, described it as an “inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies” (2006: 393). Land is the ultimate object of settlers’ desire. Settler states seek to extirpate Indigenous societies through a “logic of elimination,” which facilitates the taking of territory (387). This article explores ontologies of land as they are constituted across the contested political boundaries of settler states where settler ontologies work to dispossess, commodify, and extract economic value from land. We contrast this with Indigenous ontologies of land that seek to revitalize and maintain relationships of mutual obligation among humans and the other-than-human (Coulthard 2014; Wildcat et al. 2014).<sup>1</sup>

Indigenous efforts to contest and unsettle modes of conceiving of and relating to land, through their own practices and those created by settlers and settler-state institutions, are central to this analysis. Examples of these efforts include revitalization of land-based practices such as caring for and collecting culturally important plants, and the use of settler legal institutions to seek redress for dispossession and expand the landholdings of Indigenous polities. We term these kinds of practices “unsettling the land,” given their

propensity to cultivate ontological hybridity and contribute toward decolonial futures. The importance of relationality and hybridity are key points made by scholars of Indigenous political ecology (Carroll 2015; Middleton 2010, 2015). Clint Carroll notes that “reconciling the resource- and relationship-based approaches [in Indigenous communities] has meant coming to terms with the development of an indigenous state” (2015: 10). The work of decolonization, the dismantling of the ideological and institutional structures of settler colonialism, is often expressed through hybrid modalities of land that work on multiple registers to advance Indigenous sovereignty over territory and revitalize land-based practices. Thinking through the different ways in which land is perceived and experienced helps to illuminate the role of ontology in movements for social and environmental justice for Indigenous peoples.

We argue for an approach that examines the coexistence, contradictions, and consequences of different ontologies of land. As argued by Tania Li, land is an assemblage that can be viewed for its ontologies—“the nature of its thing-ness”—and its affordances—“what it’s good for—its values” (2014b: 589). Settler colonialism operates through ontological foreclosures that obfuscate Indigenous ontologies of land. Viewing land through the lens of ontology (what kind of thing it is), and how different people see land, helps to unwrap the diverse ways land is constituted. This is central to examining histories of Indigenous dispossession and contemporary struggles for revitalization, resurgence, and decolonization in settler colonial contexts. We highlight the work of scholars that complicate taken-for-granted and monolithic ontologies of land to problematize the very categories of land produced by colonial practice. This review explores four literatures: political economy, political ecology, post-humanism, and Indigenous studies. We also provide two case studies: oil palm as a settler plant in Indonesia and land revitalization as a practice of ontological hybridity in the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Nation of North America’s Intermountain West. Finally, we outline an agenda for scholars in anthropology, geography, Indigenous studies, and critical environmental studies to take up culturally constituted ontologies of land long highlighted by scholars of Indigenous studies, anthropology, and other fields (Deloria 1999, 2001; Hunt 2014). This article starts with an examination of the role of land, dispossession, and subsistence production in Marxian political-economic theory, which forms an important foundation for political ecology, albeit with certain limitations.

### **Land, Capitalism, and Dispossession**

Much of the literature on the political economy of land traces its genealogy to Karl Marx’s analysis of capitalism and the “secret of primitive accumulation” (1993: 873). The “original sin” of capitalism, what Marx calls “primitive accumulation” and what we refer to hereafter as “primary accumulation,” is the process through which the worker is divorced of their means of production and is thus alienated from their own labor.<sup>2</sup> This is achieved through the transformation of subsistence production into capital and producers into wage laborers (874). Before capitalist accumulation can begin, this primary mode of dispossession—the separation of workers from their means of subsistence—must take place. Marx suggests that this is a “historical process” relegated to the “pre-history of capital” (875). This processual understanding of primary accumulation is valuable but needs modification for application to settler colonial contexts. In these contexts, the dispossession of land is at the heart of domination. Marx acknowledges the varied means used to separate workers from the means of production, highlighting how “the law itself . . . becomes the instrument by which people’s land is stolen” (885). These juridical forms, not relegated to the past, are still central to the control of land in settler state contexts today.

The story of primary accumulation entails not only land being taken away but also its commodification (Polanyi 1944). Indeed, the juridical structures of dispossession (land's commodification and transformation into property) are fundamental to settler colonial dispossession. Recent scholarship on global land grabbing links large-scale transformations of land to transnational processes involving private capital and state-managed land tenure regimes (Deininger 2011; Hall 2013; Peluso and Lund 2011). The dispossession of land is frequently obscured by the absence of a set of clear actors, instead operating through diffuse structural processes. Often, the focus is on sites outside the Anglophone settler world and involves processes affecting smallholders (Fairhead et al. 2012; Hall et al. 2011; Li 2011). The political valence of these "land grabs" is less suited to describing settler colonial contexts that operate differently than to large-scale land investment by multinational private actors and nation-states.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, using the land grab as an analytic necessitates paying attention to the ontological basis of state and private-led dispossession as much as the political-economic mechanisms of accumulation itself. For Indigenous peoples, as well as peasants and other agriculturalists, the loss of land is experienced as more than just alienation from a means of subsistence production. Enclosure of common lands and their transformation into private property is a double negation: the loss of land, and the devastation of the sets of relationships that constitute land in Indigenous ontologies. Capitalism is fundamental to the structural conditions of settler colonialism.

### Settler Colonialism and Capitalism

Recent scholarship in Indigenous studies offers insight into the imbrication of these forms. Glen Coulthard (2014) uses Marx's notion of "primary accumulation" to analyze settler colonialism, but he suggests three important modifications: a temporal reframing that sees primary accumulation as ongoing rather than something relegated to a "stage" before capitalist accumulation (Harvey 2003; Sanyal 2014); a release from the developmentalism and economic reductionism of orthodox Marxism; and a shift of framing from capitalist to colonial relations. This last move enables Coulthard to critique the liberal settler state's emphasis on recognition as the basis for negotiation over land claims and self-governance. Coulthard shows that primary accumulation accomplished through violence is largely replaced in contemporary times with discursive regimes and other ostensibly benign structures, which are in reality imbued with relations of power and domination that further entrench settler colonialism and the extraction of capital from Indigenous lands.

Claims to land are often established through the doctrine of *terra nullius*, or empty land, a concept that is still deployed in extant struggles for environmental justice (Kosek 2006; Moreton-Robinson 2004; Voyles 2015; Whyte 2013). Labor is largely ancillary to this endeavor, in which land is remade into property amenable to extracting economic value (Coulthard 2014; Wolfe 2009). Law plays an important role in these transformations, reinforcing a racialized and gendered white settler sovereignty over property that enables Indigenous dispossession, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015) explicates in her examination of settler claims in Australia and other Anglophone settler states. Under these regimes, human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship between owner and property.<sup>4</sup> Coulthard argues that political recognition of Indigenous peoples in Canada obscures the ongoing settler colonial project of primary accumulation—the drive toward dispossession of Indigenous lands while extracting further surplus value through resource exploitation—and that any attempt to transcend these structures of domination requires the resuscitation of relationships of mutual obligation between land and people as opposed to deeper engagement with settler-state institutions. Carroll, writing about the Cherokee Nation, also

remarks that Indigenous environmental governance represents a different, “relationships-based approach” that allows for “agency of nonhuman beings and the maintenance of relationships with them” (2015: 8).

It is important to rethink the ontology of land in any context of decolonization. Canadian First Nations’ land claims negotiations are oriented around maintaining access to land and resources for capitalist development. But this may run counter to reliance on that same land for spiritual and material sustenance of varied kinds, including those in opposition to the forces of extractive capital. Shifting subjectivities in relation to land are also addressed by Coulthard’s discussion of the land claims process in Canada. Land is not just a material object but a “way of knowing, of experiencing and relating to the world and with others” (2014: 61). Conceptions of land configure how one relates, not just to land, but to many other actors—human and nonhuman—in the broader community (Nadasdy 2003, 2007). In accepting colonial recognition of their rights to land, Indigenous nations can end up undermining their reciprocal relationships to that land.<sup>5</sup>

Although land is central to understanding settler colonialism, it is not the only register of domination (Simpson and Smith 2014). Taiaiake Alfred (1999) calls on Indigenous leaders to turn toward traditional modes of governance and not emulate settler state regimes of recognition that reinscribe settler modes of domination. Indigenous studies scholars also highlight the genealogy of racial categorizations that serve to obscure the territoriality of conquest by creating a homogenous Indigenous space and population (Byrd 2011). The exclusion of nonpropertied and racialized labor in settler states also works to reproduce inequalities, often under the guise of environmental stewardship (Cattelino 2015). Relatively little of anthropological literature attends deeply to both the ontologies of land and the politics of those ontologies, despite work in Native American and Indigenous studies that examine ontologies of land within a political context of settler colonialism and dispossession. Vine Deloria (1999, 2001) contrasts settler aesthetic connections to land with ones that are set in a history of “prolonged occupation” in which situated experience is essential to an understanding of sacredness, noting that a sense of respect for land is not the result of an intellectual process, but rather something cultivated through experience. Deloria looks at ceremony and sacrifice as forms of reciprocity, which challenge settler society to move beyond modes of conservation focused on human use to one that looks at all forms of life and existence.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the unexamined presupposition of much postcolonial theory, settler colonialism is not relegated to the past but instead represents an ongoing structure of dispossession and violence (Wolfe 1999). It challenges the narratives liberal democratic states tell about themselves as inclusive, democratic, and multicultural (Simpson 2014).

This conventional narrative occludes the fact that many Anglophone states of the Global North were built on a foundation of violence and dispossession. Indigenous inhabitants of these states were removed from the land through genocidal policies that sought forcible assimilation or outright elimination of Indigenous peoples. Wolfe (2011) argues for a genealogy of “post-frontier” strategies for enveloping Indigenous nations into settler states—not just a historicized story of dispossession. These “techniques of settlement” are an important part of how structures of settler colonialism are sedimented into the state, as exemplified by the General Allotment Act of 1887. Wolfe points out that Indigenous peoples are at first violently subjugated—a suppression of Nativeness in all its forms—to the liberal settler state mode of governmentality, which facilitates subsequent assimilationist policies. For example, the undermining of tribal patrimony through allotment of lands into individually owned plots made property easier to circulate into the hands of white settlers. Wolfe challenges the idea that removal and assimilation are opposing approaches to governing Native Americans, but sees it as dispossession by other means. Allotment is notable for how it dis-

embeds people from their land and removes aboriginal title. There is a double move here in which freed land is acquired by the state, and then the cheap labor of the newly dispossessed is requisitioned in emergent capitalist relations. The diminution of Indigenous homelands forced many into wage labor as subsistence practices became untenable. Political ecology, especially Indigenous political ecology, can illuminate how subjectivity is linked to the control and dispossession of land.

### Indigenous Political Ecology and Environmental Subjectivities

Early work in political ecology examined the issue of land degradation, calling attention to the political-economic forces that work to discursively produce land according to socially constructed schema of quality rather than reflecting an “objective” ecological condition outside of society (Blaikie 1985; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). In recent years, this literature has challenged scholars to show that how we see “nature” and how power moves in relation to its management are inextricably linked (Robbins 2012). Tim Ingold (2000) outlines two opposing ways of seeing land as, on one hand, a spherical, embedded, localized perception and, on the other, a global view in which the human transcends nature and the world is seen as property or resources to be managed for the public good. The view from above that a global perspective engenders is one that writers such as James Scott (1998) and Bruno Latour (1987) have similarly seen as enabling abstraction, measurement, calculation, and accumulation of knowledge by experts at centers of calculation and power. These authors focus on the role of simplification in enabling power to expand, including the simplification of landscapes. These simplifications make things legible (Scott 1998) or immutable, accumulatable, and combinable (Latour 1987). When the simplifications ultimately fail, this failure is not acknowledged as such, but rather understood as something in need of a technoscientific fix (Mitchell 2002; Scott 1998). Technoscientific claims of understanding—and thus power over—landscapes are thus strengthened.

Through this process, the way in which landscapes are seen shifts. As Donald Moore observes in his analysis of struggles for territory in Kaerezi, Zimbabwe, “abstract, empty, and exchangeable space is a historical product, not an essence” (2005: 20). In his examination of the impacts of colonization in Egypt, Timothy Mitchell describes how the process facilitated “the spread of a political order that inscribes in the social world a new conception of space, new forms of personhood, and a new means of manufacturing the experience of the real” (1991: ix). Thus, another key insight from the political ecology literature is that, while ways of understanding land can change how power over land operates, these concepts can also change actors’ subjectivities, changing how they manage their own conduct in relation to land.

Looking at colonialism, development, and other projects of land management, several authors, often influenced by Michel Foucault’s work on governmentality, explore how subjects come to participate in projects of their own rule (Agrawal 2005; Li 2014a; Moore 2005) and how, in Moore’s words, “different political technologies produce territory, including its presumed ‘natural, features’” (2005: 7). Jeremy Campbell (2015) explores how settlers on the frontier can work to conjure private property in the absence of a strong state presence, demonstrating the limits of state-centric approaches that fail to account for the political and economic power of settlers to realize their own visions of a transformed landscape. Bruce Braun (2000) examines how the evolution of a geological vision impacted conceptualizations of Haida Gwaii (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands) in Canada. Braun argues that when governing is done to manage the relationship between populations and territory, the qualities of territory (land) are as a result not static but rather continuously reconstituted.

Governing must be continuously reordered to structure conduct in response to shifting constructions of nature. The adoption of a geological understanding of land in Haida Gwaii, for example, gave rise to new forms of calculation and governance in relation to it. As land came to be understood as vertical, human subjectivities changed to better manage it. Arun Agrawal (2005) touches on similar ideas in his discussion of community forestry programs in Kumaon, India. He conceives of environmentality as a framework for understanding how environmental subjects are created, through participation in the “intimate government” of local forests. Timothy Luke (2009) similarly shows how subjectivities of expert management are recast when nature is conceived in terms of coupled socioecological systems. Seeing nature as a complex system under threat invites expert managerial control. By examining the work of three technical scientific bodies, Luke demonstrate how Earth system science has given rise to a global green governmentality exercised by ecological “expertarchy” to map, monitor, measure, and, ultimately, manage nature and population for the public good.

For these authors, self-interest comes to be realized through participation in different forms of practice. For Li (2014b), ways of understanding land outline what, and especially who, is excluded from that land. Every regime of exclusion must be legitimated and can therefore be contested. Li notes the prominence of moral arguments and references to the social value of investment in driving contemporary land grabs. This is the extension of Ingold’s idea of the need to optimize land use for the public good: not only can we manage land according to global understanding, but we must do so for the public good, even if some publics’ interests must be sacrificed to do so.

This literature has sometimes been critiqued for its implicit biases. Thus, the emergence of an Indigenous political ecology seeks to address the elisions of political-economic approaches that are “limited by a reliance on Euro-derived concepts of power, political economy and human–environmental relations . . . [that] may reproduce colonial relations of power, while eliding Indigenous peoples’ own solutions to problems” (Middleton 2015: 561). The unique position of Indigenous peoples, given their status as both authorities on their homelands and subjects of a settler state that lays claim to this homeland, contrasts with many cases in political ecology in which “singular states comprise the operational governmental authority to which their subjects must react” (Carroll 2014: 37). Beth Rose Middleton outlines the key tenets of an Indigenous political ecology as:

- (1) attention to “coloniality” or ongoing practices of colonialism (e.g. displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands; no recognition of indigenous self-determination); (2) culturally specific approaches reframing analyses in keeping with indigenous knowledge systems; (3) recognition and prioritization of indigenous self-determination, as expressed through indigenous governance; and (4) attention to decolonizing processes that explicitly dismantle systems of internalized and externalized colonial praxis. (2015: 562)

Recent critiques of the cultural underpinnings of sovereignty that are inherent to Indigenous nation building have suggested that sovereignty itself can have problematic instrumental effects (Alfred 1999; Nadasdy 2017). But the necessity of engaging its forms still stands. One hybrid approach is the use of land-as-property in creative ways that deflect its forms to promote the creation of Indigenous space. As Carroll notes, “the need to maintain land-based practices as critical components of tribal identities continues to make the topic of land reacquisition and consolidation central to the study Indigenous environmental issues, and, despite its conceptual flaws, Indigenous sovereignty is a critical tool in this process” (2014: 38). The way in which different ontologies of land management operate can be illustrated by cases we discuss in the next two sections: oil palm as a settler plant in

Indonesia, and land revitalization practices in the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Nation in North America.

### **Settler Ontology: Oil Palm**

Ontological studies have been critiqued for a focus on the primitive and exotic (Bessire and Bond 2014; Kockelman 2016), for emphasis on abstract discussion (Willerslev 2004), and for turning away from problem-oriented ethnography, especially that which deals with power and politics (Feinberg et al. 2013; Ramos 2012). In one of the most influential works in post-humanism, or the ontological turn, Eduardo Kohn (2013: 94) states that his concern is not with how Native peoples think about forests—the focus of work by several generations of environmental anthropologists—but rather on how forests themselves think. But the issue in settler colonialism is neither how the forest thinks nor how Native people think about the forest, but rather how settlers un-think both Native and forest ontologies.

Settler colonialism operates through a reworking of not just the physical landscape but also the ontological landscape. This reworking is all about difference: settler systems of land management are rarely the same as Native systems. For one thing, they are often based on cultivation not of native plants but rather of introduced exotics. This principle is well illustrated by the case of oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis* Jacq.) cultivation in the Indo-Malay region (Byerlee et al. 2016; Carlson et al. 2012). The plantation system in which most oil palm is cultivated is a quintessential example of settler agriculture. One of the most important characteristics of the plant at the center of the oil palm industry is its nonnative origin (cf. Ives 2014): oil palm is an exotic from West Africa, first introduced to the East Indies in the second half of the nineteenth century, and its cultivation in the region exploded in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The parastatal sector has developed oil palm in Indonesia and Malaysia strictly as an estate crop. Smallholder cultivation of oil palm has been supported only when attached to estates: a succession of government projects over the past half-century, called nucleus estates, credit cooperatives, and partnerships, have organized smallholdings around an inner estate core, on which they are dependent for credit and processing of their oil (Potter 2016: 321–324). Oil palm estates have routinely appropriated independent smallholdings, resulting in widespread disruption of and conflict with rural communities (Cramb and McCarthy 2016; McCarthy et al. 2012; Potter 2016). Repeating a pattern that prevailed during the colonial era, the state and its elites have, in effect, used the exotic oil palm as a tool to bring about resettlement of rural landscapes by outsiders, either displacing local peoples or transforming them from a landed peasantry into a landless labor force. This was not an inevitable but rather a historically contingent development. This promotion of an estate model of development ignores the robust history of smallholder commodity production in the region (Dove 2011); it ignores the fact that smallholders account for 80 percent of production in Thailand, the region's third-largest producer; and it ignores the extensive involvement in oil palm cultivation by smallholders, both within and independent of government schemes, across Malaysian and Indonesian Borneo: independent smallholdings in particular are undercounted in government statistics, if they are counted at all, reflecting the fact that they have no place in official world-views (Byerlee 2014; Cramb and Sujang 2013; Potter 2016).

Derek Byerlee (2014: 591) regards the dominance of the estate model as an aberration (cf. Potter 2016), which he attributes to the same factors that favored the estate model during the colonial era: high commodity prices, a convergence of state and investor interests, and a high modern belief in the virtues of agribusiness. In practical terms, in order to develop the estates, the smallholdings that otherwise consume land and labor must be displaced and ruled out as alternatives. This has been described as “land grabbing” or “accumulation



by dispossession” which suggests a process of forceful assault on the traditional rights of local peoples (Gellert 2015; cf. Harvey 2004; White et al. 2012). Before the physical landscape can be grabbed, however, the conceptual landscape must first be secured; before local people can be dispossessed, work must be done so that it does not look like dispossession (Bissonnette 2013; West 2016).

The primary conceptual work of land grabbing and dispossession is to rule out any possible alternative model. This was historically accomplished in the Indo-Malay region through the colonial doctrine of dualism (Boeke 1953), a belief that Native smallholders cannot produce commodities for market, which must be left entirely to the European estate sector—a doctrine that to some extent survives today (Cramb 2011). This intellectual doctrine was physically sustained by the estate model of cultivation itself. Recent work on estates and similar “concessions” suggests that there is an epistemic imperialism to all such development schemes (Bonneuil 2001; Hardin 2002). These schemes construct bounded spaces in which exotic plants and knowledges can flourish and in which native plants and knowledges cannot. The forceful exclusion of local elements from such sites represents a modern act of purification (Latour 1993: 10–11). As with the alien and exotic oil palm, a *tabula rasa* is constructed that privileges the crops and technologies of powerful outsiders and deprives the crop- and place-specific knowledge of local smallholders. The *tabula rasa* permits the exercise of the imagination, to imagine something that is not yet there, which will not resemble anything that is there. The existence of alternatives is inimical to this act of the settler imagination. This ontological displacement of Native vision by settler vision makes possible the physical displacement; it underpins the assault on land rights of the aforementioned doctrine of *terra nullius*. It helps to rationalize the international community’s demand for “free, prior, and informed consent” for local communities affected by oil palm schemes, with its assumption that the role of such communities is at best to surrender their land, not to compete for the oil palm market.<sup>7</sup>

The many Native smallholders who have adopted oil palm have engaged in their own ontological work. Smallholders are often ambivalent about adopting commodity production for markets, as exemplified by the rash of felling of rubber trees in Borneo during the 1930s due to a belief that the exotic rubber was eating the soul of the native rice (Dove 2011). Such mythmaking reflects the challenge of constructing a hybrid ontology of traditional subsistence-oriented agriculture and market-oriented commodity production. The challenge of hybridity is reflected today in the “rumor panics” that periodically sweep across Borneo’s new oil palm landscapes, warning of strangers who are kidnapping Dayak people to traffic their organs, leading in some instances to the murder of strangers found in Dayak territories (Semedi 2014). This is ontological work, done to distinguish the Dayak and their lifestyle and values from those of the wider world that drives the oil palm expansion.

### Post-humanism and Indigenous Ontologies

The recent ontological turn has implications for questions of how ideas of land are constituted and what that means for Indigenous struggles for land and decolonization. To return to Kohn’s (2013: 94) comments on studying Indigenous environmental knowledge, he writes, “If we limit our thinking to thinking through how other people think we will always end up circumscribing ontology by epistemology.” Several scholars have argued that by turning away from Indigenous ontologies, post-humanism misses critical insights that might be gained from Indigenous perspectives. Kim TallBear argues that “indigenous standpoints accord greater animacy to nonhumans, including nonorganisms, such as stones and places, which help form (Indigenous) peoples as humans constituted in much

more complex ways than in simple biological terms” (2017: 187). According to scholars like TallBear, Indigenous peoples have sets of relations with the animate/inanimate agents bound up in land that are more intimate and complex than much of what post-humanist scholarship can capture. What is seen as “alive” in much post-humanist discourse is more limited than in much Indigenous thinking. Zoe Todd (2015) makes a case for the need to decolonize post-humanist scholarship, and questions the locus of agency ascribed in Eurocentric thinking. Juanita Sundberg similarly argues that “Anglo-European scholarship is the only tradition truly alive in posthumanist theorizing” (2014: 38)—that all other scholarship or epistemologies are treated as truly dead through their exclusion.

Understanding that the human/nature divide is far from universal is key for decolonizing and expanding post-humanist scholarship for these scholars. Many offer Indigenous ontologies, asserting that they capture perspectives that are more nuanced than what a simple erasure of a nature/culture schism can capture. Vanessa Watts, for example, offers Place-Thought as a way of framing an understanding that land is alive and thinking and “that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts” (Watts 2013: 21). She frames the world in this view as a space “where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated” (2013: 21). This framing helps to overcome what she sees as the problem of subjugated agency for nonhumans in post-humanist scholarship where “the controversial element of agency is often redesigned when applied to non-humans, thereby keeping this epistemological-ontological divide intact” (29). Sundberg (2014), drawing from both the Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen and the Zapatistas’ framing of the pluriverse, highlights the importance of “multipistemic literacy” in an expansive post-humanism that doesn’t subordinate particular ontologies and forms of agency. For these scholars, land, as a relationship consisting of complex and non-subjugated agencies, is key to overcoming the ontological hurdles of Eurocentric imaginings of post-humanism that these authors critique.

### **Perspectivism**

Many of today’s studies of nonhuman others cite the canonical work of Jakob von Uexküll (2010 [1934]) on the concept of the *umwelt*, the unique perceptual world in which each organism exists, which is different from that of every other organism. One of the more interesting examples of an effort to transcend one’s own *umwelt* is represented in the ethnographic studies of “perspectivism.” Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998: 470), whose scholarship has roots in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966, 1969), synthesized a great deal of literature on the Native peoples of the Amazon, common to which was the belief that animals and spirits “see their food as human food (jaguars see blood as manioc beer, vultures see the maggots in rotting meat as grilled fish, etc.), they see their bodily attributes (fur, feathers, claws, beaks etc.) as body decorations or cultural instruments, they see their social system as organized in the same way as human institutions are (with chiefs, shamans, ceremonies, exogamous moieties, etc.)” Kohn’s (2013) work in Ecuador is one of the more intensive explorations of these beliefs, which suggest that cross-species recognition of very different, perceived worlds—the *umwelt* of the other—is possible.

Rebecca Feinberg and colleagues (2013: 2) write that “one of the greatest strengths of multispecies ethnography is the ‘speculative wonder’ captured in its ontological revisions, a wonder rife with potential to generate alternative ethical possibilities for living in the world.” Perspectivist beliefs are all about recognition of alternate worldviews (Tsing 2015). As Alf Hornborg (2001: 135) writes, “What is remarkable about these cosmologies, from a modern vantage-point, is the extent to which Amazonians have acknowledged the limitations of their own, human powers of perception, and the empathy with which they have imagined

other species' ways of viewing the world." Alternatives are inherently political. Awareness of alternative worldviews can help us to survive, as Kohn (2013: 2) writes, "so as not to become meat we must return the jaguar's gaze." Unawareness of alternative worldviews is dangerous for the weak, but not for the strong. Forest spirits and jaguars see humans as game, but they are not concerned with how humans see them. There is an asymmetry to vision; there is a "hierarchy of perspective" (149).

Shifting from the forest to the plantation, from the animal *umwelt* to settler ontology, a similar asymmetry holds: perspectivism is a Native, subaltern facility. To survive, Indigenous peoples develop a keen sense of how settlers and ruling elites see them, which can actually crystallize the development of so-called Indigenous identity (Li 2000), but the reverse rarely holds true. In the Euro-American worldview that drives much settler colonialism, there is a single uniform nature (Kohn 2013: 155–156), not multiple natures or multiple *umwelt*. Settler ontologies tend to be universalistic: they are undercut by any recognition—much less comparative evaluation of the merits—of alternative worldviews. The alternative of small-holder production of oil palm has not, therefore, been part of the discourse of oil palm development in Southeast Asia. When beings recognize the reality of another's worldview, they are able to see the other as a subject, a person, a human being (Kohn 2013: 93; Viveiros de Castro 1998: 477). In the ontological displacement that accompanies settler projects like oil palm estates, not only is the fact that Native people are able to produce oil palm or other market crops denied, but even their humanity (e.g., as modern citizens versus backward primitives) may be denied (Tsing 2005). The traditional beliefs of the Dayak resemble those reported by Viveiros de Castro (1998) from the Amazon: the Dayak believe that the spirits see them as pigs, ripe for hunting. The contemporary "rumor panics" described earlier are a modern example of this perspectivism; the panics speak to how the Dayak think the wider world, with its oil palm markets, sees them: as bodies and organs. This is the biopolitics of the oil palm boom (Foucault 1997). The Dayak effort to confront the purported organ traffickers is, in effect, their effort to "return the jaguar's gaze" and so survive it.

### ***Indigenous Ontology: Hybridity and Revitalizing Relationships with Land***

A case study of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) of the Flathead Indian Reservation, located in the northwestern United States, can illustrate how hybrid ontologies of land offer ways to consolidate a tribal land base in the service of revitalizing relationships with the other-than-human world. Much of the CSKT's work is oriented toward reversing the dispossession of Indigenous lands by Euro-American settlers who claimed title to newly created homesteads in the early twentieth century (Bigart and Woodcock 1996). This was made possible by the transformation of land into property, which took place through US government-led land surveys and subsequent allotment (Latta 1989). Despite the territorial-bounded reservation of land stipulated in the 1855 Treaty of Hellgate, more than half of the unceded land within the territory of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Nation was sold as property to white settlers (Smith 1979). It was not until 1934 that the US federal allotment policy ended, but that did nothing to reverse the prior loss of land. Only in the wake of the civil rights and Red Power movements did governance policies begin to change in the 1970s (Ruppel 2008). This marked the beginning of the era of revitalization. Today, the officials at the CSKT Tribal Lands Department have a clear sense of their objective: to return land to tribal control, but not strictly as a form of property. This land base also provides for the expansion of land-based practices such as caring for culturally important relations with the nonhuman world, the protection of landscapes imbued with collective memories, and the provision of material benefits to the Native community, such as housing.

The CSKT Tribal Lands Department was established in 1982. It emerged from the Tribal Realty Office that was created in the 1960s, with Bureau of Indian Affairs realty staff tasked with overseeing the titling and transfer of common and individual trust lands on the reservation. The new Tribal Lands Department grew to take on additional activities, including permitting surveys, land use planning, and, most importantly, land acquisition. The 2000s saw the increasing size and role of tribal governance in land acquisition. This came with the emergence of new technologies, like geographic information systems (GIS), as tools to track, manage, and prioritize its landholdings starting in the 1990s.<sup>8</sup> Lands were purchased at the market rate and then put through a process to have the land transferred to trust status, meaning it became tribal land again (though still as property). Still, the consolidation of tribal landholdings facilitates the creation of spaces for practices that recognize and instantiate relationships among the human and other-than-human.

The emergence of the Tribal Lands Department marks a shift in which bureaucratic institutions of land management, many of them prescribed by federal rules, came to dominate how land was *used* and therefore *perceived*. As discussed earlier, these bureaucratized modes of managing land carry their own subjectivities, which embed their own ontologies of land. Settler state institutions of private property cannot be entirely circumvented given the extant relationship between tribal nations and the US government, but relationships can be revitalized even within these institutions. In this context, it is also hard to imagine revitalization without attention to alternate modalities like the relationality described by many scholars (Blaser 2016; Carroll 2015; Coulthard 2014; TallBear 2017; Todd 2015). If land is constituted in the ways it is governed, then it is also tied up with different practices, from the spatial subjectivities of GIS to manage land and target its reacquisition, to the subjectivities of land as constituted in the reciprocal obligations of tribal land use practices. These different subjectivities are oriented toward different affordances of land. Spatial technologies are amenable to registering the value of “resources” such as timber but not to the more phenomenological idea of an experience relating to other-than-human persons—or stories that represent and reproduce collective memories constitutive of Indigenous belonging to place.

Land and the environment are always bound up in the historical discursive apparatuses of the state—not just settler states, but also Indigenous states—at the same time as Indigenous peoples are successfully contesting these logics and practices, a central point made by Carroll (2015). But working to reacquire land solely on the register of settler state regimes of land ownership and capitalist relations is limiting, so land-based practices are essential to reworking the very notion of land underpinning settler colonial domination. Settler modes of thinking about the land are being appropriated to take the land back while other modes of thinking are being practiced. This story is not limited to bureaucratic processes of land acquisition and management: it also involves land-based practices that focus on reciprocal obligations and the other-than-human to revitalize alternate ontologies. Land-based practices, in many cases, occur outside the purview of tribal government departments. But they are connected, as funding to support cultural activities frequently comes from the tribal government, although cultural leadership largely emanates from a council of elders. This highlights a tension that exists in Indigenous governance in which formal state institutions contend with practices that are underwritten by very different ontological categories. Sometimes this emerges as conflict over the disposition of land. The work of decolonization operates at this nexus where different modalities of land coexist, often uneasily or in conflict with each other. Therefore, decolonization cannot simply be the rejection of one modality of land for the other, but rather follows an uneasy path to maintain a hybrid assemblage of ontologies, with all their attendant affordances and limitations.

## Conclusion

Settler colonialism entrenches itself by obfuscating Indigenous ontologies. The “original sin” that precedes the extraction of economic value is more than the alienation of workers from the means of production: it is the alienation of Indigenous ontologies by settler modes of thinking and controlling land. In confronting this legacy, decolonial praxis is premised on the ability to revitalize Indigenous ontologies through grounded practices. But those practices require a land base that is often reacquired only through strategic engagements premised on settler ontologies of land-as-property. Recent scholarship is beginning to open up our understanding of different ontologies of land. Drawing on work in Indigenous studies, post-humanism, and political ecology that highlights the importance of relationality and reciprocity across the human and other-than-human, this article suggests that we are poised to better address the politics at stake in ontologies of land by attending to the possibilities of hybridity. Structures of dispossession are defined not only by their economic or political valence to settler society, but also through the notions, practices, and representations that they obfuscate.

Indigenous movements for social and environmental justice are deeply tied to issues of land rights. By operating on multiple ontological registers rather than the occlusion of one mode by another, some Indigenous states are successfully reacquiring lands and revitalizing land-based practices. Our case studies highlight practices that undermine or inflect settler ontologies and affordances of land. Decolonization, as an emergent set of practices, does not simply reflect a swing of the pendulum back to what existed before allotment and white settlement through mirrored, reversed processes of repossession, but is something creatively formed through contemporary struggles around what it means to be Indigenous amid enduring—but not immutable—structures of capitalism and settler colonial domination. Decolonization is constitutive of a resistant and ameliorative politics that unravels land’s singularity. This kind of politics is both anti-capitalist and anticolonial, as it challenges the flattening of land that is fundamental to such relations. Decolonization is often invoked as a metaphor without a clear sense of praxis (Tuck and Yang 2012). Future scholarship should attend carefully to land-based practices in theorizing power and domination alongside revitalization and resurgence.

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### ■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the editors of *Environment and Society*, as well as Erik Harms, Paul Kockelman, Elliott Prasse-Freeman, and Kali Rubaii, for helpful feedback on early drafts of this work. We are also grateful for two anonymous reviewers who provided comments that contributed toward the improvement of this article.

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#### ■ NOTES

1. Although we set up a contrast between settler and Indigenous ontologies, and speak about them in categorical terms, this is not meant to suggest that they are monolithic across space and time. Indigenous states can operate on a similar ontological footing when seeking to extract economic value from natural resources. But unlike settler states, Indigenous states commonly use these tools to empower Indigenous sovereignty. Similarly, settler ontologies are not the same everywhere, though they generally facilitate ongoing processes of dispossession (even in cases where they are imagined as “recognizing” Indigenous title).
2. We use the term “primary accumulation” to highlight the elemental and ongoing role of this process in settler colonies—and to avoid the developmentalist framing implied in the term “primitive.”
3. This is not to suggest that it plays no role, however, as private actors such as timber and mineral resource corporations have significant landholdings in Indigenous homelands.
4. This traces back to G. W. F. Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, reformulated by Franz Fanon in his postcolonial critique of recognition. Glen Coulthard argues that Fanon’s insights about how the master controls the act of recognition is central to the reproduction of colonial relations. According to Coulthard, rejection of recognition is a necessary strategy to subvert these dynamics (Coulthard 2014). Audra Simpson (2014) offers a nuanced depiction of how individuals or collectives operationalize these kinds of strategies in settler states through the notion of “refusal” (Simpson 2014).
5. In some cases, we refer to Indigenous nations to foreground institutional actors, and in others we refer to Indigenous peoples to capture other forms of affinity and commonality. The two are not always synonymous, as the boundaries between nation and community are constituted in complex ways.
6. Arguably, ecological science has done a better job of foregrounding other-than-human relationality, though often at the expense of the human. Also problematic is the mechanistic model of functionalism that ecological science reifies at the exclusion of other forms of knowledge that understand relationships in different ways besides cause and effect (e.g., as morally contingent relations that rely on reciprocity).

7. Free, prior, and informed consent is also impacted by a politics of recognition among state and international actors that can be critiqued for reproducing asymmetrical power relations between Indigenous smallholders, the state, and capital.
8. There is much more to these processes of changing geospatial subjectivities than we can cover here. For more on the emergence of geospatial forms of knowledge and the way that mapping can create new publics, see Rankin (2016) and Hébert and Brock (2017).

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## CHAPTER 5

# Hunting for Justice

## An Indigenous Critique of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

*Lauren Eichler and David Baumeister*

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (hereafter NAM) is an umbrella term for a set of conservation policies and principles that has in recent decades become the prevailing doctrine within US and Canadian wildlife protection and management agencies. According to a 2012 technical review published by the Wildlife Society and the Boone and Crockett Club, the NAM “has led to the form, function, and successes of wildlife conservation and management in the United States and Canada” (Organ et al. 2012: viii). As the theoretical underpinning for policies aimed at ensuring equal access to natural resources for all citizens, the NAM is framed as a tool for “democratic engagement in the conservation process” (3). The model’s core principles reflect this agenda. They include the following:

- (1) Wildlife resources are a public trust.
- (2) Markets for game are eliminated.
- (3) Allocation of wildlife is by law.
- (4) Wildlife can be killed only for a legitimate purpose.
- (5) Wildlife is considered an international resource.
- (6) Science is the proper tool to discharge wildlife policy.
- (7) Democracy of hunting is standard. (Organ et al. 2012: 2; also in Geist et al. 2001: 176–179; Organ et al. 2010: x)

As the NAM advocates Joanna Prukop and Ronald J. Regan explain in an opinion piece defending the model, a central driver of the model's development was "the concept of democracy of hunting, equal access for all, coupled with the North American pioneer spirit that could best be evoked and nurtured through the hunting experience once frontiers ceased to exist" (2005: 375). With this commitment to a uniquely North American form of democratization, the model appears to accord with the Environmental Protection Agency's definition of environmental justice: "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies" (EPA 2018). Despite its claim to support environmental equality, the NAM is open to criticism for too narrowly elevating the interests of sport hunters, who, in the United States, comprise 6 percent of the general population and are 89 percent male and 94 percent white (USFWS and USCB 2011: 29–31). Similarly, the architects of the model may be faulted for framing the history of North American conservation in such a way as to privilege the role of hunters while neglecting the contributions made by nonhunters, environmental groups, and animal rights organizations. Critics of the NAM have largely argued that the model's prescriptive elements, such as what types of interactions with wildlife are appropriate and how conservation policy should be developed, are vague or unfeasible. While such criticisms may be valid, they cast little light on ways in which the model may actively contribute to environmental injustice. Among both the NAM's prominent advocates and critics, the interests and views of Native Americans and First Nations have been ignored.

In this article, we develop a new critique of the NAM, arguing that the model not only excludes certain groups but also contributes to environmental injustice via its legitimization of settler colonialism. Rooted in Western conceptions of property, human-animal relations, and science, the NAM articulates the ideology that is used in conservation and hunting policies that inhibit Native Americans from "achieving a level of environmental quality adequate for indigenous peoples to practice and maintain their self-defined cultural relation to the land and natural environment" (Grijalva 2012: 26). Building on the work of scholars who have argued that such state-based wildlife management programs are colonial (Asch 1989; Egan and Place 2012; Gombay 2014; Kulchyski and Tester 2007; Sandlos 2007; Schneider 2013), we contend that the principles of the NAM, along with the ontological assumptions that they rest on, are antithetical to American Indian views of property, non-human personhood, and knowledge. Insofar as the NAM is the current dominant paradigm for conservation efforts in the United States and Canada, it reflects long-standing colonial efforts to limit Indigenous sovereignty and perpetuates what Patrick Wolfe calls the "logic of elimination" (2006: 387). As non-Native settlers living within traditionally Kalapuya and Haudenosaunee lands, we hope this article contributes in some small way to undoing this legacy of colonial violence and to making Native views and concerns heard by a wider audience.

Our analysis is broken into two sections. First, we review the history of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and critically examine its first and sixth principles: "wildlife resources are a public trust" and "science is the proper tool to discharge wildlife policy." We argue that in the history of the NAM, and of the public trust doctrine (PTD) within which it is rooted, Indigenous perspectives and traditional ecological knowledge have been overlooked. Though presented as prototypically "American," the NAM doctrine perpetuates settler colonialism, excluding Native American people's environmental wisdom from the conservation conversation. Next, we examine the central role of hunting in the NAM, with special attention paid to the model's guidelines for "legitimate" hunting. Despite the NAM's ostensible aim of democratizing hunting and promoting environmental equality, the model runs counter to many Indigenous American hunting traditions by construing

hunted animals as “wildlife resources,” imperiling Indigenous relationships to the land and the other animals that live on it. Like its trafficking in an exclusionary vision of Americanness and American history, the NAM’s reliance on a settler colonial conception of hunting contributes to the social and cultural death of Indigenous tribes and First Nations peoples.

### The North American Model and Settler Colonialism

While the term “North American model of wildlife conservation” is of recent origin, advocates of the model claim that the raft of practices, principles, and policies that constitute it are rooted in earlier stages of US history. In a 2001 article that helped introduce the term, conservationists Valerius Geist, Shane Mahoney, and John Organ express this historical background:

Wildlife conservation in Canada and the United States emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, recognizably distinct from other forms found worldwide. We refer to this form as the “North American model of wildlife conservation.” The model has endured a test of time that has seen dramatic changes in society and the landscapes of North America. The model has also become a system of sustainable development of a renewable natural resource that is without parallel in the world. (2001: 175)

The proponents of the NAM stress that one of the model’s core virtues is that the NAM is the product of a distinctively “North American” or “American” history. In a later piece, for instance, Geist and Organ state: “People must be made aware of the North American model and their stake in it. They must learn that this is a uniquely American construct, and its principles reflect the very values America was founded on” (2004: 54). Exactly which American or North American values and interests are reflected in the model’s historical success, however, becomes an important point worth investigating. In the NAM literature, the earliest conservation efforts are portrayed as the result of a conflict between market hunters, who decimated wildlife populations like the bison, and sport hunters, who wanted to conserve wildlife so they could engage in the invigorating pastime of pursuing and killing undomesticated animals. Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell, the founders of the Boone and Crockett Club, are often put forward as early champions of the public-oriented conservation ethos that the model seeks to make explicit (Geist et al. 2001: 180; Prukop and Regan 2005: 375). According to Organ and colleagues, Roosevelt and Grinnell were “nation builders” who prized the ability of American people to “carve the country out of a wilderness frontier,” believing sport hunting to be a means of maintaining “the character of the nation” despite the closing of the frontier (2012: 4). Since 2001, an active scholarly and policy-oriented literature has emerged to convert this deep history of values into the explicit set of policy principles encapsulated by the NAM. Geist, Mahoney, and Organ, along with other conservationists and wildlife professionals, have developed a broad defense of the model that elaborates on the central ideas iterated above. The model, these authors argue, is distinctly North American, has been an enormous success over its decades-long history, and is now an example for other parts of the world to follow.

Several scholars have critically analyzed the intersection of wildlife conservation policy and the development of “American” identity (Herman 2014; Semcer and Pozewitz 2013). In her recent sweeping study, Dorceta Taylor focuses on the rise of the American conservation movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the period during which the values at the heart of the NAM were crystallized. According to Taylor, “the conservation movement arose against a backdrop of racism, sexism, class conflicts, and nativism that shaped the nation in profound ways,” and these factors are “critical to

our understanding of how discourses about the environment were developed, policies formulated, and institutions organized” (2016: 9). The story of the NAM’s origin follows this pattern. Critics of the NAM argue that its narrow focus on hunters and the particular framing of the origins of conservation have created a history of conservation that is dominated by white men from rural areas (Feldpausch-Parker et al. 2017; Nelson et al. 2011; Peterson and Nelson 2017). But even these critics do not consider the particular implications that the history of the NAM has for Native peoples. Like many of the histories written by white settlers, those who have written the history of the NAM draw from and reproduce the myth that the North American continent “had previously been *terra nullius*, a land without people” (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014: 2). In framing the origin of conservation as arising out of a conflict between market and sport hunters, such authors ignore the fact that the decimation of animal species like the bison was integral to the US and Canadian governments’ project of Indian removal and elimination, especially for northwestern and plains nations like the Nez Perce and Oglala Lakota, who not only depended on the bison but considered them kin (Hegyí 2017; Hubbard 2014; LaDuke 1999; Sandlos 2007; Smits 1994). By omitting the presence of Native Americans while proudly asserting the quintessentially American character of the NAM’s conservation principles, the NAM enacts a key mechanism of settler colonialism: the elimination of Indigenous peoples in order to achieve authority over the land and resources while simultaneously constructing a uniquely “native” settler identity—a species of American exceptionalism. In this respect, the NAM mythologizes Americanness while eschewing the history of the aboriginal inhabitants of North America.

The Americanness of the NAM is also evident in the origins of its first, keystone principle: wildlife resources are a public trust. This principle is grounded on the historically European public trust doctrine, which holds “that wildlife is owned by no one and is held in trust for the benefit of present and future generations by government” (Organ et al. 2012: 11). In theory, this doctrine limits the power of the sovereign to do whatever it wishes with the natural world irrespective of the will of its citizens while also establishing and encouraging long-term conservation solutions that “reflect broad social values and norms” (Organ 2014: 408). According to Geist and Organ, the American PTD derives its legal basis from an 1848 US Supreme Court ruling built round Chief Justice Roger Taney’s interpretation of the English *Magna Carta*, which was in turn based on the Roman Institutes of Justinian of 529 CE. The implication of this claim is that the US and Canadian publics have an agreed-upon set of ideals regarding environmental conservation, all of which arose in the context of a particular Anglo-European American experience. However, as the history of the NAM presented by Geist and Organ demonstrates, this experience is one of westward expansion and colonization. Thus, the norms and values represented by the NAM and PTD are those held by the dominant settler society, which are extensions of their European roots.

This becomes clearer when we delve into particular aspects of the NAM’s use of the PTD, such as its concepts of stewardship, property, and wildlife. As mentioned earlier, the PTD requires governmental stewardship of natural resources—including land, water, and wildlife—so as to ensure the continued existence of society. In other words, resources are managed, conserved, and regulated in order to preserve them for later consumption. In theory, if tribes and First Nations had the freedom to determine their own methods and practices of stewardship, the concept of the PTD might not necessarily be colonial. In fact, American Indian scholars from various tribes have expressed similar notions in their descriptions of the relationship between tribe and land. For example, Danny Billie, a member of the Seminole nation, explains: “When we talk about the environment and our way of life, it is all connected. When red people talk of our ways, land claims, and rights to self-determination, some white people look at us as greedy, wanting everything. . . . We are the caretakers of the Creator’s creation. It is our job to follow the instructions that he has given us” (quoted in

LaDuke 1999: 39). Likewise, Louis Moosenose, a Dogrib chief, states: “This land was given to us to make our living for food, clothing, and income. . . . The land was given to us to look after it and the land was supposed to be protected. The land, the water, the animals, are here for us to make a living on it, and it’s not to play with” (quoted in Asch 1989: 210). However, in the context of the United States and Canada, where Indigenous sovereignty is limited and the federal government enacts environmental policies that affect both Indigenous resources and resources beyond Indian Country, recognizing the US and Canadian governments as stewards becomes contentious, especially when disagreements arise over the best methods for taking care of the earth.

The issue of stewardship in the PTD is further complicated insofar as it is predicated on *terra nullius* and Western notions of property and ownership. The concept of *terra nullius* entails “that the wild or ‘insufficiently’ used land constitutes vacant land available to the first settler” (Hendlin 2014: 141). Colonial governments have repeatedly used doctrines of discovery and *terra nullius* as justifications to remove Indigenous peoples and take their land, as well as to erase the violent force used to depopulate these lands of their original inhabitants (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). From the perspective of the NAM, the US and Canadian governments are stewards over land and resources that previously belonged to no one or were not being used efficiently enough (Sandlos 2007). Native peoples claimed certain territories as their own, but because they did not have formal written documentation of their “ownership” and because they did not enclose their lands with fences or use the land as the colonists did (such as for grazing domesticated livestock), colonial settlers could justify appropriating their land on the grounds that Indians “do but run over the grass, as do also the foxes and wild beasts” (Cushman 1855: 34; see also Anderson 2004; Arneil 1996). Legislation such as the General Allotment Act of 1887 allowed the US government to survey Indian land and parcel it out to individuals in smaller allotments, under the belief that by giving Native Americans private property they would assimilate into Western civilization more quickly. Any remaining land was sold to settlers or taken in trust by the government. Thus, *terra nullius* worked in tandem with Western notions of property to dispossess Native peoples of their lands and turn those lands over to settlers or the state. In this respect, the NAM’s uncritical adoption of the PTD and the history of *terra nullius* as part of westward colonial expansion affirm that it is part of a settler colonial legacy. Thus, any notion that the model promotes environmental justice is undermined by the history of Indigenous dispossession that it ignores yet profits from.

It should be noted that the first principle of the NAM relies on the problematic concept of “wildlife resources,” a notion repeated in the NAM’s fifth principle: “Wildlife is considered an international resource.” There are two issues with this concept. First, the notion of “wildlife” does not easily translate to many Native American cultures. As Michael Asch notes, “wildlife,” from a Western perspective, refers to any nonhuman animals or plants that are undomesticated and reside in spaces largely uncultivated or uninhabited by humans (wilderness). This definition entails a binary opposition between domestic and wild. Domestic animals are privately owned, while wild animals do not belong to any particular individual or group until they have been legally hunted or captured. However, as Asch points out, this does not mean that no one owns wildlife. In the United States and Canada, wildlife falls under the category of common property or public trust, meaning that the government has the authority to manage wildlife and decide when and who has access to it by conferring licenses or permits. Even though some tribes like the Dene shared the view that animals and plants become the property of those who harvest or hunt them, before harvest those animals and plants were neither owned nor “wild.” Typically, to say something is wild is to say it is untamed or out of control, but also that it is savage (perhaps violent) and uncivilized. For the colonists to view the land and life of the North America as wild



meant, for the Lakota author Luther Standing Bear, that “the white man is still troubled by primitive fears; he still has in his consciousness the perils of this frontier continent” (1933: 248). For Native peoples, this land is home and they know it intimately, like one knows family. Standing Bear explains: “Kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky, and water was a real and active principle. For the animal and bird world there existed a brotherly feeling that kept the Lakota safe among them” (193). Thus, the land and animals were neither owned nor “wild,” but rather friends and kin who, when engaged with properly and respectfully, reciprocated the relationship.

This brings us to the second problem with the concept of “wildlife resources”: claiming that nonhuman animals, plants, and land are “resources” implies that the primary relationship between humans and the world is one in which humans, existing apart from the world, dominate, extract, and consume the world for their benefit. This type of relationship runs counter to Indigenous notions of relationality and nonhuman agency. According to Indigenous scholars, everything is related and humans are not the only beings to possess liveliness, agency, or purposiveness (Atleo 2004; Bunge 1984; Cajete 2000; Cordova 2007; Deloria 1999; LaDuke 1999; McPherson and Rabb 2011; Norton-Smith 2010; Standing Bear 1933; Whitt 2009). In other words, the NAM regards nonhuman beings as objects, whereas many Indigenous perspectives view these beings as subjects. According to the Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr., “everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships makes up the natural world as we experience it” (1999: 34). Put differently, no one human or nonhuman exists independently of relationships; all things are connected to one another, and, importantly for Deloria, these relationships are *lively*. In contrast to the view that nonhuman nature is dead, inert, or passive, in Native American worlds nonhuman animals like deer, bears, and salmon—along with bodies of water, features of the land like canyons or buttes, and sacred objects like drums or pipes—all possess a kind of power/force/spirit. Algonkin tribes call it *manitou*, but other tribes use terms like *nilchi’i* (Diné), *usen* (Apache), and *orenda* (Wendat). This quality imbues these beings with their own animacy, power, and purposiveness, which call for recognition and respect. However, possessing this spirit is not in itself sufficient for personhood. As the Shawnee philosopher Thomas Norton-Smith (2010) explains, any being can be a person so long as it participates in a network of social and moral relationships. These relationships resemble family ties, reinforcing the notion that humans and nonhuman persons are intimately connected and related. According to the Choctaw scholar Laurelyn Whitt: “The land and living entities which make it up are not apart from, but a part, of the people. Nor is ‘the environment’ something outside of, or surrounding a people. The relation of belonging is ontologically basic. With inherent possession, agency is sometimes held to be reciprocal—a people belongs to/owns the land, and the land belongs to/owns a people” (2009: 43). In this sense, Native Americans are not only the land’s stewards and consumers, but are also, in turn, taken care of by the land and expected to give back to it. The PTD, which privileges human action and agency and envisions the land, animals, and plants as passive resources for human use, is incommensurable with these Indigenous approaches to land and nonhuman life.

The problem with framing the NAM as an outgrowth of colonial history and the PTD does not end there. Another effect of this historical framing that excludes Native Americans is that traditional ecological knowledge is also disregarded. Indigenous peoples have been managing the land of North America for much longer than the colonists have and have acquired considerable knowledge about ecologically sound practices and the proper types of relationships needed to ensure the futures of both humans and the animals and plants on which they rely. However, knowledge of this sort is discredited by the NAM, whose sixth principle states that “science is the proper tool for discharging wildlife policy.” Regarding

this principle, Geist and Organ state, “Development of wildlife management and all related policies must be based on knowledge, and knowledge is advanced by experience and fact finding . . . including surveys, population dynamics, behavior and habitual studies, statistics, and contemporary adaptive management and structural decision making” (2012: 21). On this view, the scientific method must be applied for the acquisition of true knowledge. However, the Western methods used in the development of conservation and hunting policies can conflict with Indigenous science. For example, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement between Canada and the Inuit stipulates that the Inuit will have unrestricted access for harvesting and hunting in Nunavik unless the state deems this contrary to the conservation of certain species. The decision regarding which species are to be conserved and which are to be hunted is determined by government scientists, not the people who live in proximity to the animals they hunt. As one member of the Inuit, J. J., explains: “They [government scientists] will counter you with what they have, and all might and power, to use studies upon studies. They will only use estimates. Such mathematical precision that they can try to convince you. And for an elder to, or a good hunter to hear that, someone’s missing the boat somewhere. The imposition placed upon us from a knowledge way different from the Inuit way” (quoted in Gombay 2014: 8). The “true” knowledge determined by the scientists does not take into consideration Native methodologies, thus disrespecting Indigenous communities and disregarding their ability to make autonomous conservation decisions.

From an Indigenous standpoint, privileging Western scientific methods and the results of those methods means that Indigenous knowledge, acquired over generations both experientially and through methods like storytelling, observation, and dreams, will be dismissed from the outset. As Deloria explains, “Western science holds that ideas, concepts, and experiences must be clearly stated, and be capable of replication in an experimental setting by an objective observer. Any bit of data or body of knowledge that does not meet this standard is suspect or rejected out of hand” (1999: 44). By contrast, “Indians believed that everything that humans experience has value and instructs us in some aspect of life” (45). Because knowledge passed down through generations via oral stories, or knowledge acquired via a vision quest, has subjective, emotional, or mythic components, it does not fit within the parameters of “true knowledge” that are tethered to the scientific method.

Previous critics of the NAM have cited other reasons to be wary of the sixth principle. M. Nils Peterson and Michael Paul Nelson argue that the prescriptive element of the sixth principle—that science is the “proper” tool to discharge wildlife policy—assumes that scientific facts about nature can somehow determine on their own the best environmental policy. However, these authors point out, “scientifically derived facts cannot dictate choices without the application of values” (2017: 49). In other words, politics, ideology, religious affiliation, and other value-inflected factors will ultimately influence how scientific facts are interpreted and used in policy making. For Peterson and Nelson, the application of scientific knowledge should embrace this element and be guided by values of critical thinking and conservation ethics. On this level, Indigenous science has an important contribution to make. Unlike Western science, which tends to break things down into its component parts and investigate them independently from one another, Native American scientific traditions underscore the relationality of the world and its inhabitants. This provides a broader perspective on how different beings can be affected by different decisions (Atleo 2011; Cajete 2000; Deloria 1999; Fixico 2003; Kimmerer 2013).

Second, on the Indigenous view, the method for pursuing knowledge is an irreducibly ethical endeavor and can never be separated from its moral implications. Scientific inquiry cannot in fact be objective or innocent. The effort to acquire or apply knowledge is always performative. The very act of inquiry, the methods used, and the use of the knowledge

shape and change the nature of both the knowledge and the knower. Because knowledge making and using is always interactive, it is also always ethical. This means that, from a Native perspective, knowledge is true “if the action or performance respectfully and successfully achieves a goal” (Norton-Smith 2010: 65). In this way, the acquisition of knowledge always aims at a moral good. According to Deloria, knowledge is collected not for its own sake but for finding “the proper road along which, for the duration of a person’s life, individuals were supposed to walk” (1999: 46). Because the NAM relies on a Western paradigm of scientific inquiry and knowledge, which often seeks knowledge for its own sake, the moral implications of that knowledge are not readily apparent. Knowledge can therefore not itself provide a clear basis for right action.

We have seen that even though the NAM is presented as a distinctively American construct, this identity is premised on the colonization of the Americas and the exclusion of Native Americans and their history with the land. Because it uncritically assumes the viability of the PTD, the NAM perpetuates settler colonial views of property, sovereignty, and human-nonhuman relations that limit the freedom of Indigenous peoples to “practice and maintain their self-defined cultural relation to the land and natural environment” (Grijalva 2012: 26). This dimension of the NAM also excludes Indigenous scientific methods as viable sources of knowledge useful for determining wildlife policy. Native peoples have consistently rejected this imposed history and, in doing so, have insisted that a recuperation of their own knowledge and wisdom is necessary for environmental justice (Atleo 2011; Cajete 2000; LaDuke 1999; Whitt 2009; Wildcat 2009).

A prime example of this Indigenous alternative to the Americanness of the NAM is Luther Standing Bear, who grew up during the burgeoning conservation movement. He wrote:

The American Indian is of the soil, whether it be the region of forests, plains, pueblos, or mesas. He fits into the landscape, for the hand that fashioned the continent also fashioned the man for his surroundings. He once grew as naturally as the wild sunflowers; he belongs just as the buffalo belonged. . . . The white man doesn’t understand the Indian for the reason that he does not understand America. He is too far removed from its formative processes. The roots of the tree of his life have not yet grasped the rock and soil. (1933: 248)

Though he was not addressing the early conservationists specifically, Standing Bear’s claim that American Indians have grown with the land, giving them intimate knowledge of the earth, water, plants, and animals of the continent, which the recently arrived settlers do not have the experience to grasp, marks the folly of ignoring Indigenous wisdom when it comes to making conservation decisions.

### **Ethical Hunting, Law, and Legitimate Use**

As a quintessential activity written into the history of American conservation, hunting is central to the NAM. Because hunting plays such a key part in discussions of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, in this section we discuss the history and role of hunting in the NAM, review relevant positions on hunting that are found in the environmental ethics and animal rights literatures, and further develop the Indigenous critique of the NAM that began in the preceding section.

The connection between hunting and Americanness can be traced back to the origins of the conservation movement. To highlight a prominent example: Theodore Roosevelt, in his 1893 book *The Wilderness Hunter*, asserts that “the chase is among the best of all national

pastimes; it cultivates that vigorous manliness for the lack of which in a nation, as in an individual, the possession of no other qualities can possibly atone” (1998: 329). Though in more politically correct terms, similar sentiments have been echoed in recent entries in the NAM literature. Shane Mahoney and John Jackson, for instance, describe a “conservation awakening,” which was “led by a rising class of hunters committed to democratic access to nature, the sustainable use of wildlife for personal rather than market purposes and a European standard of fair chase in hunting” (2013: 449). While Mahoney and Jackson sketch this history with the NAM explicitly in mind, the link between hunting, conservation, and the history of the emergence of an American national identity is also well established in the popular imaginary, exemplified by the recent best seller *American Hunter: How Legendary Hunters Shaped America*. Cowritten by Willie Robertson, star of the A&E show *Duck Dynasty*, *American Hunter* tracks the sport-hunting exploits of a long lineage of American cultural and political figures, with Native American hunters appearing in an early chapter focused on precolonial times but quickly exiting from view as the historical chronology advances (Robertson and Doyle 2015).

The NAM not only frames its history around hunting, but also situates hunters and hunting at the center of conservation efforts. Advocates of the NAM stress its effectiveness as a means of maintaining wildlife populations at sustainable levels for use by present and future generations of hunters and anglers (Geist et al. 2001; Geist and Organ 2004; Mahoney 2009; Mahoney and Jackson 2013; Organ et al. 2014; Prukop and Regan 2005). Several of the model’s principles explicitly refer to hunting—to its demarketization, its legal allocation, its legitimate purposiveness, and its democratic availability—and hunting is implied even in those principles that do not refer to it explicitly. Principles 2 (“markets for game are eliminated”), 3 (“allocation of wildlife is by law”), and 7 (“democracy of hunting is standard”) all gesture toward equality, freedom, and environmental justice. Each of these principles seeks to limit any one group from overusing or abusing wildlife. The second principle does so by preventing market hunters from depleting wildlife to unsustainable levels. Principle 3 asserts that that the best means of ensuring equal access to wildlife is to make access determined by law rather than free markets, land ownerships, or status. The seventh principle is premised on the idea that “the opportunity for citizens in good standing to hunt in Canada and the U.S. is a hallmark of our democracy” (Organ et al. 2012: 23)—a hallmark that can only be ensured by securing gun rights. Notably, each of these principles is primarily concerned with mitigating obstacles that may interfere with the needs of sport hunters, while neglecting the interests of nonhunting conservationists, as well as those who hunt other than for sport, such as subsistence or ritual hunters.

The NAM is one among many theoretical justifications of hunting to have emerged in recent decades. Beyond the hunting-for-conservation arguments central to the NAM, moral defenses of hunting have ranged from claims that the human desire to kill is natural and culturally valuable (Causey 1989), that hunting is a heroic, ecologically respectful activity reconcilable with modernity (Swan 1995), that hunting encourages an ecologically indispensable attitude toward the death of individual hunted animals and the simultaneous consecration of animal species (Scruton 1997), that hunting encourages trophic responsibility and ecological expertise (Cahoone 2009), or that hunting has intrinsic moral value when understood as a mode of fair-chase game playing (Morris 2013). Scholars have also offered targeted analyses of the ethical justifications behind various hunting policies and legislation other than the North American model, either within North America (Cheyne and Adler 2007) or in a comparative, global context (Fischer et al. 2013).

Diverse moral critiques of hunting have also been offered. Some have developed the idea that hunting reflects violent and patriarchal social relations (King 1991), a hypothesis supported by empirical research on the effect of gender on the attitudes that wildlife

professionals themselves have toward the role of hunting in wildlife management (Sanborn and Schmidt 1995). As a historically curtailed human practice, hunting has been linked to the demonstration of white supremacy in the Antebellum South (Proctor 2002).

More frequently, though, hunting has been a target of animal rights advocates. To take a prominent example from this literature, Peter Singer has argued that deer hunting may be permissible when artificially overpopulated populations of deer, due to their overgrazing of vegetation, are at risk of death by starvation during winter months (2011: 122). While this converges with the NAM to an extent, the motivation for Singer's conclusion is radically different from that of the model's architects. While the NAM's goal is to ensure the continued availability of natural resources for use by citizens of North American nations, the goal in the case of Singer and other animal welfare advocates is the elimination of as much suffering as possible among animals of all kinds (human and nonhuman).

Other animal rights theorists reject arguments in favor of hunting altogether. Gary Francione, for example, argues that "hunting involves the infliction of an enormous amount of pain and suffering on animals, and the overwhelming amount of that pain and suffering simply cannot be characterized as necessary" (2000: 21). Paralleling Indigenous critiques of Western privatization of "natural resources," Francione insists that the true motive driving agencies that promote hunting for conservation is economic rather than environmental (18).

Defenders of the NAM have attempted to debunk the animal rights critique of hunting. Invoking "modern science" against the animal rights "ideology," Geist and Organ argue that the animal rights "philosophy is based on splitting life into a higher sentient form and a lower sentient one. In so doing, it denies the unity of life, and that is a falsehood. . . . As animals, we are bound to eat life in order to live" (2004: 54). This statement may seem ironic given the emphasis the NAM places on sport hunting over subsistence hunting. Although many scholars have approached the debate between animal rights advocates and advocates of conservationist hunting in a nuanced way, assessing the merits of both sides (Dizard 1999; Vitali 1990; Wade 1990; Wood 1997), defenders of the NAM are uniformly critical of the animal rights position.

Notably, the needs of Native Americans and First Nations and their perspectives on hunting appear to be almost totally absent from the scholarly conversations just reviewed. Native American positions on hunting tend to fall outside the field of established positions, aligning with neither the NAM's defenders nor critics of hunting, such as animal rights advocates. This omission suggests that in order to achieve greater inclusivity, entrenched theoretical oppositions need to be rethought. The remainder of this section will sketch the contours of an Indigenous approach to hunting by departing from two components of the NAM's framing of hunting that are anathema to Indigenous perspectives.

As stated earlier, the third principle of the NAM—that allocation of wildlife is by law—entails that the best way to ensure that all people have access to wildlife is through law rather than markets, status, and so on. This guaranteed access nonetheless excludes Indigenous peoples, for federal and state laws are often at odds, for various reasons, with Indigenously defined rights, sovereignty, and customs. First, there is the issue of precedence. Since Indigenous nations exist within the bounds of the United States and Canada and are not entirely independent of these countries, they must navigate some amount of state and federal regulation. However, these laws are relatively new compared with traditional Native practices. Though Native peoples did not codify their laws in writing, their oral traditions and practices are treated as sacred principles and guidelines for interacting with the non-human world (Cajete 2000). Thus, the more recent federal laws and the traditional laws of Native peoples come into conflict. For example, in 1860, the US claimed 90 percent of the Nez Perce reservation (more than five million acres) after gold was found on their lands.

Though the right to hunt on that land was not taken away, the land is now shot through with highways, peppered with neighborhoods and shopping complexes, and set aside for national parks like Yellowstone. Despite the difficulty this causes, the Nez Perce continue to hunt off reservation. As the Nez Perce member Louis Thomas Holt explains: “You know, we’ve been doing this for thousands of years, and this is what keeps it goin’. You know, it’s for our culture, it’s for our people . . . it’s our treaty; it’s our right” (quoted in Hegyi 2017).

However, their settler neighbors are not always sympathetic. Bill Hoppe, a white settler in Montana who works as an outfitter guiding big-game hunts around the state, takes issue with the treaties that allow the Nez Perce to hunt both outside the state-defined hunting season and beyond the bounds of their reservation. He says: “We all live in the same country; we’re all citizens in the same country. They keep talking about they’re a sovereign nation. I’ll give ‘em that. They can be their sovereign nation—on their reservation. But when they come off that reservation they should abide by all the other regulations” (quoted in Hegyi 2017). Lawmakers and settlers like Hoppe fail to recognize that hunting is not just recreational for the Nez Perce. Nor is it the case that wildlife conveniently remains within the boundaries of reservations, which makes it extremely difficult for Native peoples to sustain their cultural practices without treaty rights.

Second, laws implemented by the state frequently fail to allow for Native traditions, hunting methods, or relationships to the nonhuman world. Native peoples may view these laws as cumbersome and encroaching on their traditional way of life. At times, this has led Native people to counter the law, hunting what, where, and when they deemed appropriate (Gombay 2014; Sandlos 2007). For example, in 2007 five members of the Makah tribe in northwest Washington State conducted an illegal whale hunt. Though whaling is a central aspect of Makah culture and their treaty with the US government gave them the right to hunt, they had not been permitted to carry out a hunt for more than 70 years. Frustrated with the slow progress of obtaining a permit, they took matters into their own hands (Kaste 2008; McCarty 2007). Such rebellious actions are of course not always representative of the will of the entire tribe, as in this case. However, the divide among tribal members about how to respond to the regulations demonstrates how colonial laws disrupt and split apart Native communities by interfering with these communities’ traditional ways of life.

Third, conservation laws in particular were frequently made without consultation with Indigenous communities, ignoring the contributions they could make to the development of conservation practices (Ranco et al. 2011; Schneider 2013). The NAM’s faith in federal and state law for ensuring equity evidences ignorance regarding the fact that laws are not inherently fair, but can be, and often are, biased to privilege certain groups to the detriment of others.

The fourth principle of the NAM states that “wildlife can only be killed for a legitimate purpose.” The authors of the model narrowly define “legitimate purpose” as hunting for sport. Organ and colleagues write, “Those who killed merely for the fun of killing along with ‘pot hunters’ (those who hunted solely for food), debased sport hunting. . . true sportsmen were those who hunted for pleasure (never for profit), who in the field allowed game a sporting chance, and who possessed an aesthetic appreciation of the whole context of sport” (2012: 19). By valorizing sport hunting, the NAM denigrates the practices of subsistence hunting and fishing, which are integral to the livelihood and identity of many Native American cultures. It also suggests that the primary relationship between humans and nonhumans is one in which nonhumans are essentially available for human use—in this case, for entertainment. This has caused frustration among many Indigenous peoples who see nonhuman animals as purposive, active beings with their own power, knowledge, and relationships. In many Indigenous cultures—like those of the Inuit, Dene, and Ojibwa—people are taught to approach nonhumans with humility and respect and to be thankful to the

animals for gifting them with their lives and providing them with sustenance (Asch 1989; Gombay 2014; LaDuke 1999; McPherson and Rabb 2011).

Recognizing these reciprocal relationships with nonhuman animals also means knowing when to honor their lives instead of taking them. For instance, sport hunting can conflict with Native peoples' own efforts to protect certain culturally significant species, such as grizzly bears. On 30 June 2017, nine federally recognized tribes including the Hopi, Northern Cheyenne, and Piikani Nation of Canada sued the US government for removing Yellowstone grizzly bears from the list of endangered species. The decision allows hunters to now kill the bears for sport. The tribes argued that this delisting violated their religious freedom and that the decision was made without properly consulting them. As Ben Nuvamsa (2017), former chair of the Hopi in Arizona, explains: "The grizzly bear to Hopi is our medicine man. He is our relative. We—as Bear Clan members—I am Bear Clan—he's our clan deity. So it means a lot to us to protect the species from de-listing and from extinction" (see also Lundquist 2017). For Nuvamsa and many other Native Americans, nonhuman animals are seen as full persons with rights and responsibilities. As the Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson explains: "Our relationship with the moose nation, the deer nation, and the caribou nation is a treaty relationship like any other, and all the parties involved have both rights and responsibilities in terms of maintaining the agreement. The treaty outlines a relationship that, when practiced in perpetuity, maintains peaceful coexistence, respect and mutual benefit" (2011: 111). Thus, sport hunting, which causes unnecessary pain to animals and is carried out for fun, disrespects animals and disrupts the agreements made between Indigenous people and their nonhuman neighbors (Gombay 2014). By promoting sport hunting and celebrating it as a legitimate form of recreation, the NAM enshrines a level of disrespect toward both animals and Indigenous peoples.

## Conclusion

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation has been lauded as effective, just, and reflective of the ideals of North American democracy. Yet, as we have argued, the model's neglect of Native American history and the interests and needs of Native peoples belies its democratic intent. By perpetuating a settler colonial narrative of American identity, privileging an exclusionary conception of Western science, and elevating sport hunting over other forms of legitimately relating to nonhuman animals, the NAM falls short of its own purportedly inclusive aims.

As other authors have argued, to begin the process of achieving environmental justice in the context of conservation, Native peoples must be consulted and treated as coauthors of conservation legislation and policy (Gombay 2014; Ranco et al. 2011; Sandlos 2007). Doing so would allow non-Natives to better grasp Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, which would lead to better responses to Native needs. Increasing the diversity of voices at the table would fulfill the democratic mission of the NAM better than do the NAM's current set of core principles. To live up to its claims of equality and democracy, the NAM must first confront its colonial past, dispense with its singular focus on sport hunting, and take into consideration the voices of Indigenous peoples, who stand to be singularly affected by the conservation policies it promotes.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As settlers of European heritage, we wish to express our gratitude to the Indigenous scholars and communities who have shared their philosophies and have made this critique possible. We hope that this research contributes to a greater understanding of Native American philosophies. We would also like to thank the editors of *Environment and Society* for their support and the reviewers for their thoughtful feedback on this article.

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## CHAPTER 6

# Righting Names

## The Importance of Native American Philosophies of Naming for Environmental Justice

*Rebekah Sinclair*

A name is a site of power. This is true in part because of the concrete power—often political, hierarchical, statist, and colonial—that determines who gets to name whom. But for many American Indian philosophies, names also come with their own power; names have power to create or destroy worlds, build or raze relationships, and embed their bearers in networks of being and meaning that extend far beyond the “human.” Furthermore, acts of naming in Native philosophies do not simply pick out singular, complete entities; rather, naming is a humble, communal, educational enactment of the ways in which Native Americans know and relate to their world and each other.

This differs from dominant, settler colonial philosophies in which, according to Saul Kripke, names individuate and pick out entities from their environment rather than situate and embed them within it. As Viola Cordova suggests, Western names tend to refer to “static nouns” (2007: 100). Names enclose and capture unified, essential identities in exclusive possession of definable and stable traits, consistent in time and space. They designate individuals, not a relational node in a network, a personality that can shift between bodies, or a complex multiplicity. In Western philosophy, naming is connected to a particular ontology that understands individuals as the fundamental units of reality and thus of ecology, biology, anthropology, politics, ethics, law, and so on.

Why is this important for thinking about environmental management from an environmental justice perspective? Because while settler colonialism is foremost about the

ongoing dispossession of land (Alfred 2012; Tuck and Yang 2012), it includes the ongoing imposition of Western “processes of ordering” the world that continually dispossess and disallow Indigenous ways of managing land and relations with their peopled communities (Snelgrove et al. 2014; Standing Bear 2006; Whitt 2009; Wildcat 2009; Wolfe 2006). In North America, environmental management practices and policies have long participated in settler dismissal of Indigenous knowledges and needs. Such practices typically rely on settler knowledges of land, ecosystems, and bodies, and often seize control of environmental resources to which American Indian tribes have claim through complicated “bureaucratic processes that often conflict with Indigenous cultural orientations towards the natural world” (Richmond et al. 2013: 3). Even when environmental policies are aimed at including American Indian voices in practices of comanagement, they often lack the infrastructure or resources to follow through (Middleton 2013), or find Indigenous naming and knowledge of nature incompatible with the Western values that drive environmental policy (Watson 2013). For example, when Koyukon elders tried to clarify their concern regarding the decline in migrating birds in the Koyukuk/Nowitna wildlife refuge, their local knowledges and oral histories about the frequency of “speckled-bellies” (the Koyukon name for white-fronted geese) did not meet conservation biology’s standards for scientific quantification. Koyukon counting did not count, so no preservation or management plan was put in place despite the bird’s absence (Watson 2013).

In short, one can exist on one’s traditional lands and still have the use, development, and names of the lands and creatures altered so radically that Indigenous communities are still ontologically and epistemologically displaced (Alfred 2012). In particular, settler colonial namings, naming practices, education, and language colonization have dramatically altered American Indian engagement with the “material and social world . . . thus preventing ontological security.” Controlling the proper names of human or nonhuman persons—that is, the name that is ethical or appropriate—is one way in which settler colonialism and environmental management practices erase Native American knowledges and ontologies (Bang and Marin 2015: 541; see also Lomawaima 2007). In other words, “naming is *the* site at which issues with references between Western and Indigenous epistemologies unfold” (Bang et al. 2014: 11, emphasis added).

Where I live as a settler and guest in Kalapuya territory, in central Oregon, the names of lands, places, rivers, seasons, directions, and species have been changed. This is true for most territories of Turtle Island, or the land settlers now call North America. Changing the names obscures and destroys not only American Indian cultures and languages but also the familial and ethical relations represented and brought about by those names. The result is that very pressing problems—like water rights, use and distribution of “resources,” ecosystem management, and invasive species solutions—are all operating without Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies represented in those names. For example, using settler colonial names for the Chicago and Des Plaines rivers, rather than using their Indigenous names also or instead—*Sikaakwa* (Miami for “skunk place” or “onion field”) (Callary 2009), and *Sheshikmaoshike sepe* (Potawatomi for “river of the trees which flow,” referring to sugar maple trees and their sap) (Vogel 1962)—not only establishes settler temporalities, placing Indigenous names and lands in the past. It also erases important relational realities about the land itself: realities about the kinds of things that grow and live there, how the rivers interact with the wetlands, and thus how to restore or make healthy the spaces currently occupied or corroded by settler extractive technologies. In other words, not only are the regional knowledges and networks held within the names lost, but this loss has all manner of consequences for our ability to come up with holistic, creative, and just environmental policies (Bang and Marin 2015).

Furthermore, as new names and designations arise in environmental movements—names like “invasive species”—they are mostly distributed by non-Indigenous activists or scientists outside of contact with Native American peoples and thus do not reflect Native relational philosophies. Yet these new designations are often and nonetheless the only way of rendering legible Indigenous claims against settler colonial technologies or troubling species management practices. Through their control of names, settler colonial ontologies control how ecological relations, environmental injustices, and Indigenous bodies are intelligible, making it difficult for Indigenous peoples to clarify harms against their peopled communities, where people, for Thomas Norton-Smith (2010), includes animals, plants, and land and where a person is not an individual but, as Megan Bang and Ananda Marin (2015) suggest, a set of relations. As Bang and colleagues remind us, the anthropocentrism at work in Western ontology and naming is itself a form of “dispossession and epistemic violence,” as it erases the agency and value of the nonhuman peoples with whom Native Americans build their communities (2014: 8).

For centuries, American Indians have resisted settler colonialism and its extractive, eradicator, domesticating violence on Native communities, creatures, and lands precisely through radical acts of naming and renaming. In his essay about the importance of Native studies, Peter Kulchyski even argues that the interdisciplinary work done by Native studies can be summarized as “the setting right of names, the righting of names as much as the writing of names” (2000: 13). Yet there exists no extensive, systematic account to express why and how those names matter, or to explain how Indigenous names designate relations and networks, rather than individuals, and to explore how they enact and perform relational ontologies, creating tangible bonds broken by settler renaming or misnaming.

This article thus weaves together Native philosophies, philosophy of language, Indigenous stories of naming and resistance, and anthropological literature on American Indian naming to create a fuller picture of Indigenous philosophies of naming.<sup>1</sup> Importantly, I am not *creating* a Native philosophy of naming from fragmented stories that lack philosophical rigor or require translation. That kind of project would reproduce Western philosophy’s condescending, derisive treatment of Indigenous thought. Instead, following Norton-Smith, I highlight the fact that American Indian philosophies of naming are robust and fully formed, already present within and demonstrated by Native practices and beliefs (2010: 2). I want to learn from these philosophies, foregrounding Native voices, to emphasize the importance of names and the knowledges they contain for building and sustaining Indigenous communities beyond the human. Native names must become central for environmental justice to resist settler colonial violence against *all* members of Native communities.

First, I explore some central principles regarding Native American ontological theory, epistemic virtue, and ethical responsibility, setting the stage for how Native naming uniquely connects these three elements into a complete, robust philosophy. Though these philosophies may share commonalities with Indigenous philosophies from elsewhere in the world, this article focuses on American Indian philosophies because I am a settler occupying Native American lands, and my responsibility is to learn from and defer to these specific communities in their quests for environmental justice.

Amplifying the work of many American Indian authors and allies, I then focus on several principles or characteristics of Indigenous naming. In general, I note that Native American names tend to emerge from communities to expand or reaffirm those communities and are embedded in networks of consensual action by many other respectful agents (including the names themselves). Names are also intended to recall and secure knowledge of particular associations and relations, so they do not individuate but rather situate and embed what we might call “individuals-in-relations” within specific kinship structures.

Finally, I consider how decolonizing Native naming practices, and deferring to or including Indigenous names, is paramount for pursuits of environmental justice, as well as for accurately understanding the environmental and ecological relations to which Indigenous names refer and in which Native lives are embedded. Hope for environmental justice and for revitalizing land, recovering species, and so on, resides in affirming Indigenous names.

### Native Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethics

Before diving into Native philosophy of naming and its distinct ontological, epistemological, and ethical implications, let me clarify what exactly American Indian scholars mean by ontology, epistemology, and ethics. Can we even make claims about Native ontology without erasing important differences between various Native American philosophies?

For Cordova (2007), Norton-Smith (2010), Donald Fixico (2003), Anne Waters (2004), and others, there is no singular or unified Native American philosophy: only philosophies. There have always been and continue to be irreducible differences between the hundreds of American Indian cultures, lifeways, and philosophies. In maintaining their vital differences, Native Americans have resisted both homogenization by Western philosophies *and* assimilation by Western culture. Yet Cordova suggests that American Indians have begun recognizing that they “have more in common with other indigenous groups, regardless of their obvious differences, than they do with the conceptual framework of the European colonizer.” Cordova argues that it is “possible to identify some of the conceptual commonalities shared by Native Americans,” yet these commonalities are recognized and thematized by Native Americans themselves, not the colonial, Western eye (2007: 102). Even as Norton-Smith rejects a monolithic set of American Indian beliefs, he argues for the importance of recognizing “themes” and “principles” that “seem to occur across American Indian traditions” (2010: 3). Furthermore, Anne Waters and Agnes Curry (2009) suggest American Indians recognize commonalities for specific reasons. For example, commonalities help form an argument in defense of American Indian philosophies as fully formed worlds (Norton-Smith 2010). In short, these represent goal-oriented efforts (taken up at specific times for specific reasons), directed by American Indians themselves, to reject overarching, unifying theories by respecting differences while also recognizing important connections. In lieu of addressing a single Native ontology, epistemology, or ethics, I defer to Native American scholars who address contingent commonalities among irreducibly plural American Indian ontologies, epistemologies, and ethics.

Ontology is the aspect of philosophy that considers the nature of being or of what is. Waters claims that Indigenous ontologies build worlds that are multiplicitous, fluid, complex, relational, and entangled. They affirm the change of categories and identities rather than permanence and fixed essence. Summarizing the distinctions between Western and Native American ontologies, Waters suggests that Indigenous “ontology, as animate (continuously alterable),” and thus open to change rather than fixed, “will be inclusive (nonbinary) rather than exclusive (discrete binary), and have nondiscrete (unbounded) entities rather than discrete (discretely bounded) entities” (2004: 107). Jarrad Reddekop describes Native ontologies as being characterized by relationships, “beginning with an assumption that *relations* are prior, that any atomistic ‘thing’ is rather only a kind of (at least temporary) fixity or concrescence, a gathering constituted in and through these prior, dynamic, and contextual relations.” Native relational ontologies thus focus on what “happens *between* (including between levels of structure) rather than focusing *on* supposedly individual things, and indeed do so as a way of understanding what any particular thing is at any given time” (2014: 35). By doing this, Native languages, systems of categorization, and orderings

represent wholly different worlds: “different words make different worlds” (Norton-Smith 2010: 6). That is, Indigenous ontologies and beliefs create complete if open systems that “have the power to orient us in life” (Hester and Cheney 2001: 319).

For American Indian philosophies, epistemology—the study of knowledge and truth—is not independent from ethics, since knowledge is often contingent on knowing *rightly*, or in ways that help the community. In Indigenous epistemologies, the world does not need to be poked, prodded, controlled, and dissected in order to discover its inner meanings. American Indian truths are fundamentally guided by the right actions, the right goals, or what Lee Hester and Jim Cheney call responsible knowledge (“responsible truths”) and an “ethical-epistemological orientation of attentiveness” rather than of domination (2001: 319–320). For Norton-Smith, we know our knowledge is true when it is characterized by “a *respectful* success in achieving a goal” (2010: 64). Knowledge is thus based on a particular context: “Without context there can be no knowledge, or knowing, and hence knowledge exists only when belief practices develop, are in harmony with communal well-being” (Simpson 2014: xxi). In other words, how we come to understand inflects and colors the things that we know, and what we know needs to be directly related to helping our community (Cajete 2000, 2004; Jojola 2004). Vine Deloria suggests that “no body of knowledge exists for its own sake outside the moral framework of understanding” (1999: 47). So knowledge must be both respectful and useful for the community: these are the ways of determining the success or accuracy of knowledge (Basso 1996; Simpson 2014).

Furthermore, Indigenous epistemologies are characterized by humility. There are no bare facts (Deloria 1999; Norton-Smith 2010; Whitt 2009). Native American philosophies do not assume that the structures of our minds have unmitigated access to the inherent, permanent, and discrete structures of the universe, and instead recognize that no set of beliefs or knowledge is ever value neutral. American Indian epistemologies tend to affirm both the world and their ontological maps of the world, but do not confuse one for the other, as Western sciences and epistemologies often do (Norton-Smith 2010).

That respectful practices are built into epistemologies bespeaks the centrality of ethics for Indigenous worlds. According to Cordova, Native American ethics prioritizes the “we” over the “I,” understanding all life as fundamentally social and reliant, while simultaneously rejecting hierarchical ways of organizing those relations (2004: 177). Instead of seeing hierarchies, Native ethics affirm differences between creatures, land, and forces, all of whom equally “participate in the continuing creation of reality” (Deloria 1999: 47). This “complete” system” of ethics, as Cordova names it, includes responsibility not only for other members of society—which, as we recall, extends well beyond the human—but also “toward the planet which has produced one and upon which one is dependent” (177).

Importantly, these ethics are not strictly deployed with other humans, but are exchanges between the entire peopled world, where “people” includes plants, places, lands, animals, and so on (Atleo 2011; Callicot 1989; Cordova 2004; Jojola 2004; McPherson and Rabb 2011; Norton-Smith 2010; Whitt 2009). In their sweeping account of the connections between ethics, land, and personhood, Dennis McPherson and Douglas Rabb clarify that “a person is someone with whom our relationships may be, indeed must be, evaluated morally” (2011: 89). These personal relations are so intertwined that disrupting Indigenous relations to land and fellow peopled communities can be considered a way of disrupting their personhood (Alfred 2012; Bang and Marin 2015; Corntassel et al. 2009; Tuck and Yang 2012).

This connection between the animals, the environment, and personhood is central for understanding what ethics and justice mean for American Indian communities. In order to be in ethical relations with Native American peoples—to speak of the rights of or duties to Native American communities in terms of environmental justice—we must speak about the *whole* community, including the “other-than-human persons organized into congeries



of societies alongside Indigenous peoples” (Callicot 1989: 14). So while, for James Grijalva, environmental justice means “achieving a level of environmental quality adequate for Indigenous people to practice and maintain their self-defined cultural relation to the land and natural environment,” we must remember that this must also include achieving justice for the *totality* of their peopled communities (2012: 26). In order to affirm this totality, we must respect and defer to Native names, along with the relationships and knowledges they tenderly bear into the more-than-human world (Atleo 2011; Cajete 2000; LaDuke 1999, 2005; Rose 1992; Schreyer et al. 2014; Whitt 2009; Wildcat 2009).

### Indigenous Philosophy(ies) of Naming

Because environmental justice depends on affirming Indigenous communities, we now consider how Native American names, naming ceremonies, and practices play a crucial role in establishing, maintaining, and protecting Native communities, and persons within communities (Norton-Smith 2010). But a work of this scope on naming runs the risk of, as Joshua Nelson puts it, erasing “the diversity within the diversities of indigeneity” (2014, 28). So instead of making universal claims about Indigenous naming as such, I attempt to amplify the voices of Indigenous scholars and allies, providing a few leading but contingent characteristics or principles that might serve as a guide, pointing toward the vaster affirmations within complex, Native American namings.

*Names always come from and affirm peopled communities.* In *The Dance of Person and Place*, Norton-Smith provides a rich account of Shawnee child-naming practices and ceremonies that explicate this principle. In these ceremonies, new members of the Shawnee community are named and given *um’soma* affiliations, ten days after birth, by a number of the tribe’s elders or other respected persons. In Shawnee life, *um’somaki* are name groups that represent “various kinds of or characteristics of nonhuman animals” (2010: 103). Each tribal member belongs to one *um’soma*, is affiliated with one animal, and shares comradery and companionship with other members of their *um’soma*.

Nine days after a child’s birth, two elders, chosen by the family, are asked to spend one night praying and dreaming about the character and traits that each animal’s *um’somaki* represent, and to let names appear to them. On the morning of the tenth day, after a name occurs to the elders, the elders present the names that came to them, clarifying which *um’somak* the name belongs to, and retell the characteristics and habits of those animals. Once the parents choose which of the names they prefer, thanks are offered to the animals for their wisdom and power.

Here, one’s community is both the condition for and the result of a naming—and community includes the human persons, land, ecosystems, and animals whose *um’somaki* bind them together. The continued placement of children in these *um’somaki* is imperative to continue those creaturely relations. If names and the *um’somaki* change, then those relationships are distanced, dulled, or broken. In fact, naming practices, language, words, and names, and the objects, persons, and relations to which they refer are all considered alive and affective entities, part of a single community that names facilitate and result from.

*Naming ceremonies and practices are themselves agents.* Both are agential, equal parts of the community, as they are responsible for the actual giving and bestowing of a name (Bang and Marin 2015; Norton-Smith 2010). Native naming practices and ceremonies are often those in which “aspects of the natural world (e.g., places and concepts) are assigned names which become semiotic signs of nature–culture relations” (Bang and Marin 2015: 536). The naming ceremony, when done appropriately and respectfully by the correct people, “creates a bond between the name and its bearer, giving the name the power to care for and trans-

form the bearer” (Norton-Smith 2010: 104). It is the ceremony—which is composed of a community, a name, relatives, and an *umsomaki*—that bestows the name with power, setting the name into relation with the name bearer. In other words, the naming ceremony is in part responsible for facilitating or enacting the community. The “creative act of naming” brings bodies into relation with one another (Cajete 2000 181). Citing Gregory Cajete, Bang and Marin conclude that “knowing and building a relationship with land occurs through the ‘creative act’ of naming” which can make visible “conceptual and relational realities” (2015: 536).

*As agents, naming ceremonies teach respectful, epistemological practices.* Contrary to Western naming, in which names can be applied to any old thing, no matter how distant or abstract, acts of Native naming teach that it is not just inappropriate and presumptive but also impossible to name distant or abstract relations that one does not know, care for, or regularly engage with. Indigenous ways of knowing exchange the apprehension of external and settled states of affairs for respectful and responsible participation with other lives. A name situates the name bearer in a network of relations, outside of which the name does not make sense.

*Names thus result from respectful observations of and participation with, not power over, other agents.* Native names and their ceremonies place “communication and reciprocity with natural environments—rather than the desire to dominate or to establish ‘truth claims’ about those environments—at the very heart of the production of knowledge and wisdom.” Knowledge of the named creatures comes about through attentiveness and respect, not control (Hester and Cheney 2001: 324; see also Norton-Smith 2010). Tim Ingold highlights this characteristic in his discussion of the Koyukon of Alaska and their animal communities. Ingold suggests that the animal people get their names through the character traits they express. Creatures are not named by humans, *per se*, but appear to name themselves through their own enactments, habits, personal narratives, and individual life stories. For example, “stares into the water” (ospreys) and “knocked the swan down” (green-winged teal) get their names from their own life activities and self-actualization (2011: 170–171). The latter name comes from a story passed down through the Koyukon and still enacted (retold) every time Knocked the Swan Down too hastily and carelessly takes off from the water, disturbing and tipping resting creatures. Instead of abstractly bestowing a name upon a creature based on, for example, the discoverer’s name, the creaturely people in the Koyukon community perform and enact their own names. They are agents. When communities refer or speak to these peoples, they respectfully use these names, retelling the stories from which they come. In fact, Ingold calls these names “miniature stories” or “episodes of stories”: encountering a name is to encounter and experience a story about one way of being in the world (172). These names then offer real information about the ecological relations in the world.

*Native naming is governed by humility.* The Koyukon first witness practices of self-naming or agency in which other bodies in their communities name themselves through their stories, actions, songs, and lifeways. Then, as these storied names are passed down within the Koyukon community, the Koyukon respectfully recognize and refer to these creatures through their self-appointed names. Their own role in this naming practice is one of humility: to see and call as the creatures see and call themselves. In her poem “Naming the Animals,” Linda Hogan affirms this Native practice of recognizing the names of others over alternative methods such as the biblical telling of Adam’s naming of the animals. Of course, Adam’s method of naming—basically just point a finger and make a sound—is also the model of scientific naming enabled by power over rather than relationship with. For Hogan, Adam’s naming model is ludicrous: “as if [the animals] had not been there / before his words, had not / had other tongues and powers / or sung themselves into life / before him” (1993: 40). As Leanne Simpson reminds us, “true engagement requires consent” from “all beings involved” (2014: 15).

*Trial and error are important parts of naming and becoming.* Such is the case in William Smith's Alsea telling of the naming of the animal peoples. As Smith tells it, "Coyote kept on saying, 'I want that all the people should put on this horn. I want to see whom the horn will fit best.'" Notice that the animals are included in the designation 'people,' reminding us that Native ethical communities are composed of nonhumans. As each person (or people group) unsuccessfully tries on the horn, Coyote offers them names according to their practices: "Then crane put it on. He walked around, but attempted to go into the ocean. The Coyote said to him: 'It does not look good on thee, take it off. Thy name will be just crane. Thou wilt habitually wade around for mudcats (catfish). Continuous-Wader shall be thy name'" (quoted in 2012: 34). The animals thus are not essential entities in the world, before their namings; they become who they are through specific acts and are named accordingly.

*Names are context specific.* Western philosophy has obsessed about the difference between proper and improper names. In Native philosophies, names are proper insofar as they refer to specific bodies. But they might also refer to animals, whose names are both proper and common (Coyote, Raven, Spider). At the same time, individuals are often named after places, even as those places are named after other animals or relations, and so on (Basso 1996; Schreyer et al. 2014). Native names disrupt the stable differences between personal, proper names and collective, group names; the name depends on whom and how you encounter (Ingold 2011: 171). This requires listeners to engage and find out context, but it also affirms that being a person and being a collective, or in a set of relations, are interrelated.

*Names themselves are agents.* Names are not mere words or abstract signs that agential minds enact on dormant bodies. Nor are names important only because of the animal person, attribute, or other namesake they convey. According to Norton-Smith, the name bearers, naming community, and namesakes are all "animate entities," but so too are the ceremonies and practices that bestow the names, as well as names themselves (2010: 204). Names have real power as independent agents: they are living, affective, agential entities who exist in relationships with other agents and have real, concrete power in the world on their own terms (Bang et al. 2014; Bang and Marin 2015). To be an agent, or to have agency, is to actively and selectively participate with one's environment (Bang and Marin 2015: 24). Names, along with thoughts, dreams, and stories, as well as all manner of persons (human, plant, animal, etc.) count as animate, as agents. For Norton-Smith, since all of the entities are animate agents, they all display traits of personhood (2010: 7). For this reason, the mutual consent and respect of all agents are imperative if relations are to stand (Simpson 2014). When names and the relations they refer to are not respected, things could go poorly for the named individual or the ceremony participants, or perhaps the name will refuse to stick (Norton-Smith 2010). When chosen wisely, a name "is an animate entity that takes care of its bearer (104).

Finally, *Native American names refer to relations rather than strictly individuals.* Naming does not so much distinguish or individuate one body from others, but instead connects, situates and embeds bodies amongst their instantiating, enabling, cohabiting, co-constituting others. When summarizing Western theories, Steve Martinot suggests Western naming "individuates what it points out by setting it apart." This processes of individuation is totalizing because by separating a thing from its background, and by clarifying its boundaries, one makes it into a whole. This supposes that naming merely "gives presence, or brings to light what is already there awaiting individuation and discernment through an added articulation."

But from an American Indian epistemological perspective, recognizing that there are no "neutral facts," this represents a fundamental misconception about the order of operations. It seems that naming, as a theory of individuation, must actually presuppose the very

self-present, bounded individual it believes itself only to be perceiving. It merely “points to something one already has in mind” (2006: 28). To borrow Maria Lugones’s, phrasing, it is only by ontologically assuming the existence of individual unities—beginning with the belief that “the world of people and things is unified”—that our naming practices serve to extract, differentiate, and individuate (1994: 465).

Of course, Native names also clarify, address, and identify something. Indeed, American Indian naming is hyperattentive to making-present (Bang and Marin 2015: 536). Just as Western naming begins with the individual, and through a “complex series of fictions” convinces itself to have discovered this unity, Native philosophy also assumes the unit of measurement it believes itself to name (Lugones 1994: 464). But there are major differences. First, Indigenous namers not only recognize but explicitly thematize their role in creating meaning in order to know responsibly without assuming their knowledge perfectly captures the world (Norton-Smith 2010). Indigenous epistemologies do not deploy a series of fictions to make their truth universal.

Second, what they assume and make present are “relational realities” (Bang and Marin 2015: 536). Names do not function to pull out stable bodies, or totalize by “separating something from its background” (Martinot 2016: 28). Instead, names identify nodes, axes, concrescences, or intersections in a spider web. These axes cannot be reduced to the mere addition of smaller, component parts (like owl+tree, where owl and tree are individuals added together). Nor is the name-bearing node a bounded fixture, extractable from the vaster network in which it belongs. Rupert Ross, in collaboration with the Mi’kmaq, claims that Indigenous peoples have “a habit of thinking relationally, i.e., understanding *betweenness* to give rise to (at least temporary) fixities/‘things’” rather than assuming a world of atomistic things from the outset (2004: 6).

Names still refer to particular people. But the personhood revealed is fundamentally relational. Persons are always persons-in-relations or individuals-in-relation. Western philosophy sees and picks out individuals, while Native philosophies see relations, groupings. Consider Son of Raven (Clutesi 1967), Standing Bear (2006), or even Coyote (Frachtenberg 2012). To assume that these names pick out individuals is to start from an ontological position that assumes unity. Instead, Son of Raven, Standing Bear, and Coyote name places in relational nodes that have their own character and characteristics but are nevertheless not abstract or extractable.

Third and finally, the individuals-in-relations made present in these names are understood as contingent and shifting, open to change, rather than fixed and permanent. This is in part because many names pick out relations that may shift over time (Basso 1996). The boreal owls in Koyukon territory are not named just because they perch but because they perch in a certain place on a certain kind of tree (Ingold 2011: 272). A rock spring in Apache territory named Tliish Bi Tu’e (Snake’s Water) would presumably be named otherwise if inhabited by frogs. Relational shifts or new relational entities are marked by new names and renaming ceremonies (Norton-Smith 2010).

But this is also because many Native names pick out *actions*, where actions are contingent and agential rather than fixed and instinctual. For example, Koyukon animal names pick out actions in the world rather than fixed identities. The mink’s name is “bites things in water, spotted sandpipers are “flutters around the shore,” boreal owls are “perches on the lower part of spruce trees” (Ingold 2011: 169). Verb-derived names refer to a kind of doing, or a set of actions, or habits, which are in process and changeable, rather static individuals fixed in time and space (Frachtenberg 2012; Ingold 2011; Ross 2004). To behold an animal person is not to observe an object that is then perceived to act. It is “to glimpse a moment of activity that may subsequently be resolved into an objective form.” In Koyukon ontology, “each animal is the instantiation of a particular way of being alive” and a mere

“concentration of potential . . . in the entire field of relations that is life itself” (2011: 170). Indigenous names are “more frequently verb-centered, trying to emphasize not the thing-aspect of Creation but the pattern, flow and function aspect” (Ross 2004). In this way, bodies become visible not as minks but rather through the activity of “minking.”

### Recovering “Proper” Names: Environmental Justice

When named respectfully, Native names affirm and create ecological relations, educate their users on Native relational ontologies, and enact Indigenous ways of knowing in resistance to settler/ed knowledges. They are thus crucial for decolonizing the environmental movement and for affirming the bonds between Native Americans and their peopled communities. This final section will look at three ways in which recovering or using Native names is important for environmental justice.

First, reclaiming Indigenous names of people (humans, land, or animals) restores those bodies to their relational networks of respect and care (Bang and Marin 2015; Bang et al. 2014). Names can bring these kinships or axes into being (again). Even as we affirm Native naming, we must be careful not to treat its decolonizing effect as mere metaphor (Alfred 2012; Tuck and Yang 2012). Settlers (especially in environmental movements) have a long and troubled history of using both discourses of decolonization and justice, and of stealing Native stories and words, while simultaneously supporting settler practices of land occupation and use (Whitt 2009). Ethnotopography, a popular anthropological habit in the early 1900s, more frequently than not failed the Native American communities they intended to serve, sometimes despite the author’s best efforts, and exposed Native lifeways and worlds to the colonial gaze (Deloria 1999; Standing Bear 2006; Thornton 1997). This led to a Native cultural and linguistic extraction and eradication (Deloria 2007; Rose 1992; Whitt 2009). Foregrounding Native naming without addressing material redistribution affirms settler ideology. Much like language of reconciliation, such gestures might “relegate all committed injustices to the past while attempting to legitimize the status quo” (Corntassel et al. 2009: 145), ignoring other aspects of justice, including widespread recognition and respect of traditional tribal and spiritual practices, Indigenous sovereignty, participation in the political decision-making process, financial transfers and redistribution, and so on (Alfred 2005).

Yet, without these names, supposed settler allies find themselves “paying lip service to the Indigenous peoples of the region while subsequently reinscribing settler names and histories on the landscapes” (Snelgrove et al. 2014, 16). Furthermore, for many Native American peoples who do not strictly separate the material from the nonmaterial (Bang and Marin 2015; Deloria 2007; Wildcat 2009), names are part of the material fight against environmental erasure and ecological injustice. Restoring the proper names of places and peoples not only makes Indigenous lives and relations visible in the present, advancing what Bang et al. (2014) call Indigenous “time-space relations,” thus resisting settler temporalities that would relegate them to the past (Bang and Marin 2015). They are *also* part of land reclamation and revitalization, affirming Indigenous knowledges and embedding individuals in the relations to which the names refer (Bang et al. 2014; Bang and Marin 2015; Corntassel et al. 2009; Schreyer et al. 2014). Recall that names are agents that actively situate bodies back in networks of power with land, rivers, places, and peoples (Bang et al. 2014; Bang and Marin 2015). These naming practices are a mode of resistance against settler coloniality because they have the power to establish communities, connect entities to one another, and affirm future-oriented relations; they “make present certain relational realities” (Bang and Marin 2015: 538). Names enact the relations.

Speaking precisely to the reconnection brought about by these names, people of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, in what settlers call Alaska and northern Canada, have worked to compile an online, interactive map of their territory with Tlingit names, meanings, and stories. Community member Louise Gordon suggested using Tlingit names helps people “get into a good rhythm with the land,” and Susan Carlick claims of this renaming, “I think that our land would appreciate it” (quoted in Schreyer et al. 2014). These statements assert that (right) names possess the power to situate their bearers and namers back in *real*, and not simply imagined or abstract, relation to one another. They understand this naming to have real effects on not only the people but also the land, places, and rivers.

Bang and Marin make naming of place and peoples one of their central principles for desettling colonial nature-culture relations (2015: 536). They describe several moments in which an Indigenous name of a plant, river, or spot of land situated Indigenous peoples in the present and in relation to lands. First, Bang and Marin recount a moment in which a Miami teacher, Robert, helps students to understand the ontological stances reflected in Miami names, where “water-animal relationships [are] imbued in language.” The use of the Miami name *sikaakwa* for the Chicago River, combined with the teacher’s explanation of the river’s meandering, connections with other rivers, and land relations, allow the river to become visible as a network of changing, affective relations. This naming thus allows a “counter-mapping” that turns Indigenous ways of knowing into discourses of resistance against settler temporalities (537). *Sikaakwa*, roughly translatable as “pungent onion,” even clarifies that the river was named for the onion plants that dotted its shores. Here, Bang and Marin clarify that by naming places “through the use of Indigenous languages,” these teachers construct “non-humans as agentic place makers” in networks of ongoing—which is to say, contemporary—relations with the listeners (356).

We already see the second way in which Native names are important for environmental justice. Native names are caretakers of ecological knowledge about the relationships between the creatures, lands, plants, forces, and humans that have composed Native American communities but have been obscured, cut away, or paved over by settler lifestyles and economics. For Indigenous communities to be treated justly, we must recognize that “community” refers to the more-than-human world and that justice must mean learning of and restoring or otherwise caring for the ecological relations of the other bodies in those lands.

The importance of ecological knowledge in restoring ethical, just relations to Native communities is represented by two of the four primary principles guiding the Tlingit effort to restore names to their homeland (and restore their homeland): (1) place names teach you how to respect the land, and (2) place names teach you about the land (Schreyer et al. 2014.) The former reminds us that place names come with stories that contain long-held knowledge and details about lands, creatures, and how to respect them. For example, Tlingit elders recall that the name of their old summer campgrounds near Mount Áa Tlein (Altein, in English, and Tlingit for Big Lake) called “Wéinaa, which means alkali or where caribou used to come for salt lick” (Nyman and Jeer 1993; Schreyer et al. 2014, 107). But according to Tlingit community member Andrew Williams, these names came from stories that taught Tlingit young how to respect the active, seasonal relationship between these entities—the mountain with the lake, the lake with the caribou (Schreyer et al. 2014). Without these names, those stories and their knowledges disappear.

The second principle, that names teach you about the land, is formulated by Tlingit themselves: “Age-old Tlingit place names, as poetic as they are practical, carry valuable ecological and survival information. Place names represent locations where fish spawn, where moose come to drink, where edible fern roots could be found” (Schreyer et al. 2014, 108). Tlingit member David Moss recalls the oddity of a particular European island renaming that erased knowledge the ecosystem and its habitants: “But Teresa Island, I don’t know who

Teresa is, but it used to be Goat Island right? That gives you a better idea of what's on that island" (quoted in Schreyer et al. 2014, 124). In his encounters with Apache elder Charles, Keith Basso (1996) is told that many of the place names in western Apache territory refer to waters that have long been dry. As so many place names do (Basso 1996; 2005), these names offer knowledge about the healthy relations between islands and goats, caribou and salt, moose and rivers. Without the knowledge contained in those names, how can we achieve justice for the entire Tlingit community, and not just its humans?

In another example, we find that creaturely names within the Anishinaabe language appeal to relations outside of settler colonial knowledges (Bang and Marin 2015). In this example, by using the Anishinaabe language to describe a dead tree as an entity with an ongoing relationships to the ecosystem, two young Indigenous boys and their mom construct important, unsettled, ecological knowledge about the kinship of all lives. About this renaming, Bang and Marin suggest that "this is a remarkable ontological transformation of the presumed possible relations between humans and non-humans as distinct and separate that was present when the interactional medium was English. We suggest the use of Anishinaabe language (Ojibwemowin) supported relational perspectives between humans and non-humans" (540).

The ecological relations made present in these names provide much-needed knowledge about restoring and aiding creatures and places that have been devastated by settler technologies or neglect. It is knowledge of relations invisibilized under Western naming schemas. Yet as valuable as those knowledges are, Indigenous naming is not focused on returning things to the "past." Despite the long histories of these Native naming practices, they are not sedimented in an idyllic, pre-settler past, but continue to inform the very lively, very present naming practices of Indigenous peoples in resistance to settler names and the colonial, individualist ontologies they represent. Because Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies tend to be built on change and flexibility, rather than fixity and essences, American Indian worlds can encounter new problems and integrate new ideas into the groups without breaking the system (Deloria 2007; Standing Bear 2006). Native names offer ways of moving forward, even in places where the land and its inhabitants have been violently altered. This flexibility allows them to meet devastating circumstances in ways that still affirm their ontologies (Deloria 2007: 13).

Bang and colleagues' quest to rename their "plant relatives" as well as invasive species highlights how important it is to include Native Americans in the categorization of new relations, entities, and knowledges. Speaking about the process for this naming, the authors

recognized our use of the term invasive species signaled a particular epistemic and ontological stance to youth—a western science one specifically—and not one that we intended. Thus, the term invasive species placed buckthorn, and other plants that were forcibly migrated to Chicago, outside our design principle around naming our plant relatives because while they may not have been our relatives, the term disposed them as relatives to any humans. (2014: 11).

We again see that Native namings reflect ethical knowing and relational ontologies even when they need to create new names and designations for creatures. Bang et al. resist the settler colonial border, nationalist, and police logics that name various new-coming plants "invasive species," a name that would essentialize, and individualize bodies as culprit. Instead, Bang and company affirm the Indigenous epistemological principle that knowing means knowing rightly and in accordance with a relational ontologies, and name them "plants that people lost their relationships with" (11).

Here we also find Indigenous naming themes at work. As Coyote taught us about the value of trial and error in naming (Frachtenberg 2012), Bang et al. tried out a few names

to see what fit best: “We ‘fished around’ to find a name centered in our own epistemic and ontological centers” (2014: 11). And as we learned from the Lakota, Koyukon, Mi’kmaq, and Blackfoot, names are often based on verbs and actions, rather than static identities. Bang et al. also name plant relatives through their actions, and specifically, the losing of relationships. Rather than violent and eradicatory responses, this name makes present a tenderness and concern for the plants and their relational networks.

This reflection on “plants that people lost their relationship with” points toward the third way in which Indigenous names are crucial for environmental justice: using Native names elucidates relational violences that exceed the harms to “individuals.” Given our focus on relations, this point is by now already intuitive, so we can be brief. One cannot isolate harms in Indigenous ontologies. If you harm Wéinaa (alkali, where caribou used to come for salt lick), you harm the caribou (Nyman and Jeer 1993; Schreyer et al. 2014). If you harm *Sheshikmaoshike sepe* or *Sikaakwa* (rivers), you will harm the entire network to which they are connected, including the stinking onions and flowing maples. And if you harm these, you harm the Native people who were and are embedded in these communities.

## Conclusion

Working with Native American thinkers, I have tried to explicate the robust philosophies of naming at work in American Indian practices and to demonstrate their importance for better and more just environmental management practices and ecological futures. So what does settler responsibility actually look like?

Maybe we begin with recognizing the names we have been given: “*yonega* is a Tsalagi (Cherokee) term for white settlers, which connotes ‘foam of the water; moved by wind and without its own direction; clings to everything that’s solid.’” The Dakota use the term “*wasicu* . . . which means ‘taker of fat.’” In the northwest of Turtle Island, where I am a guest, “*hwunitum* is a Hul’qumi’num and SENĆOŦEN word for settler, that some have described as ‘the hungry people’” (Snelgrove 2014: 16). Accepting these identifications means recognizing we are not mere individuals, but are already seen by and situated within a network of relations to which we are accountable. Why begin here? Because responsibility cannot only mean a feel-good solidarity with, but must, more substantially, mean a responsibility, accountability, or even deferral to.

This responsibility-to means that *yonega* recognize that struggles to reclaim Indigenous place and species names are serious political and ethical struggles about who has the power to tend to or use environmental resources and in what ways. Thus, deferring to and taking up Native names is part of a “commitment to the fundamental concept of sovereignty” for Native Americans (Lomawaima 2007), especially sovereignty over their own lands and relational networks (in which we are also embedded, if often in negative ways). When we do not defer to Native names and knowledges they contain, even attempts at partnership or collaboration between Native Americans and Western scientists can end up “supplanting Indigenous peoples as legitimate knowers” of wildlife, ecological patterns, etc. (Watson 2013: 1099). As long as natural spaces, ecological problems, and environmental victories are understood through and measured in colonial terms and names, environmental resources, political power, and material distribution will lay the hands of the *yonega* (Snelgrove et al. 014).

But American Indian efforts to rename also attempt to rekindle or bring into being the relationships obscured or broken by settler lifeways. To this end, settler responsibility to right names is also an epistemic responsibility to attend other lives in their instantiating relations, not essential identities (Simpson 2014: 8). Deferring to Native American



names refuses the impulse to see ourselves, or any other creature, as situated outside of or as removed from named relations: for “the environment” is not “something outside of, surrounding a people,” but fundamentally “a part of the people” (Whitt 2009: 43). If we want to combat settler violence against Indigenous and creaturely peoples, we must rightly name the bodies-in-relation, human and non, with whom we co-make our worlds (even if those names are not in our language). We must insist on the right names of the places, peoples, creatures with whom we cohabit, and demand that these names and the relations they facilitate become central to environmental movements so that they can unsettle our relations and habits with human and nonhumans alike (Bang and Marin 2015). “May it soon be usefully so” (Basso 1996: xvii).

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### ■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my reviewers for helping to make this article stronger and more ethically responsible to the communities with and for whom I work. May we all have reviewers so committed to just writing.

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### ■ NOTE

1. I almost exclusively cite Native American authors. I know that much Western literature, especially anthropology, has treated American Indians as others to be exposed and undressed before the Western gaze. Every non-Indigenous scholar I cite (other than non-Indigenous coauthors) was first cited as a positive resource by Native Americans. I also did extra research to clarify whether they were collaborating with Native American peoples and attending to their voices and preferences. For example, I encountered Tim Ingold in the work of Bang and Marin (2014), and further research confirmed that he is a resource used positively by many Native scholars. Many texts were excluded from this literature review because their claims were clearly at the expense of, and not in the interests of, the Native stories and persons about which they spoke.

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## CHAPTER 7

### **Damaging Environments**

#### Land, Settler Colonialism, and Security for Indigenous Peoples

*Wilfrid Greaves*

Global Indigenous politics are increasingly defined around struggles against natural resource extraction occurring on Indigenous peoples' territories without their consent, and resistance to other forms of environmental harm against Indigenous communities, including anthropogenic climate change.<sup>1</sup> The stakes of these struggles are extremely high: in addition to the prospect of irreparable damage to the natural systems on which people depend, the human cost of resisting state-sanctioned and corporate-led extractive activities has been increasing. At least 185 people globally, many of them Indigenous leaders and activists, were murdered in 2017 for defending their local environments, slightly fewer than the 201 killed in 2016 but a substantial increase compared to 117 in 2014 and only 51 in 2002 (Global Witness 2014, 2018). In total, at least 1,500 killings of environmental activists and land defenders were documented from 2002 to 2017, with the actual number certainly being higher. While most of these deaths occurred in the Global South, particularly Latin America, Central Africa, South Asia, and Asia Pacific, Indigenous resistance to extractive activities is a global phenomenon. Recent examples from the Global North that illustrate Indigenous struggles to preserve their territories and protect the natural environment include protests and blockades by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe against construction of a crude oil pipeline across their North Dakota reservation (Whyte 2017); Indigenous-led protests and blockades across Canada against bitumen sands, pipelines, and hydraulically fractured natural gas (Bowles and Veltmeyer 2014; Greaves 2013; Howe 2015; Le Billon and Carter 2012; Preston 2013); Sámi-led protests against mining in northern Scandinavia (Abram 2016; Lawrence 2014;

Lawrence and Åhrén 2016); and Indigenous environmental activism and diplomacy in multilateral venues such as the Arctic Council (English 2013; Koivurova and Heinämäki 2006) and the annual Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Doolittle 2010; Ford et al. 2016; Powless 2012). Indigenous peoples are heterogeneous and varied in their views toward extractive industrial projects, but resistance to environmental harm is a central theme of Indigenous political discourses and action.

Some Indigenous political actors, as well as scholars and journalists, have explicitly adopted the language of “security” to characterize the existential nature of threats represented by contemporary conditions of environmental crisis known as the Anthropocene (Harrington and Shearing 2017). In effect, environmental degradation and the meaning of security are, for Indigenous peoples, inextricably linked. For instance, Inuit, Sámi, and other Indigenous peoples across the circumpolar Arctic have primarily operationalized security in terms of the direct and indirect effects of climate change on Arctic ecosystems, Indigenous identities, and Indigenous political and social autonomy (Greaves 2016a, 2016b; Hossain 2016). Indigenous communities in the Canadian jurisdictions of Alberta and the Northwest Territories whose health, air, water, lands, hunting game, and country foods are degraded by pollution from bitumen mining, leaks from pipelines or tailing ponds, and the contributing effects of the bitumen sands to global climate change likewise employ environmental security discourse to frame their concerns (Indigenous Environmental Network n.d.; Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion, n.d.). Food and water security, respectively, are significant aspects of Indigenous security discourse, with threats to communities’ abilities to reliably access clean, healthy, and sustainable water and traditional food resources identified as critically undermining the individual and collective well-being of Indigenous people (Hanrahan 2017; Power 2008; Whyte 2015), with particularly dilatory impacts for Indigenous women (Whyte 2014). In fact, Indigenous women experience gendered forms of insecurity that result in significantly higher rates of direct and structural violence compared with Indigenous men or non-Indigenous women (Deiter and Rude 2005; Dhillon 2015; IACHR 2015). The particular insecurities faced by Indigenous peoples have been reported in the findings of high-level international officials such as the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, and Right to Food, respectively. Overall, it has become increasingly commonplace in the post-Cold War period for “non-state units [to] claim security interests of their own,” including Indigenous peoples who “definitely have their own specific security problems” (Eriksson 1995: 278, 271–272). Notwithstanding Indigenous critiques of Western academic discourses of the Anthropocene (Sundberg 2014; Todd 2015), many threats confronting Indigenous peoples today clearly emerge from the fact of widespread human interference in complex human-animal-ecological-cultural systems on which Indigenous identities and well-being are based.

However, while many Indigenous organizations and individuals have depicted threats to their health, well-being, and continued survival as Indigenous peoples as *security* issues within public discourses, such depictions have failed to mobilize commensurate responses by the governments of their respective states. In fact, states have consistently declined to adopt exceptional policy measures in response to environmental security claims that identify damage inflicted to Indigenous lands and lives by natural resource extraction, Indigenous peoples’ lack of authority over their traditional territories, or global warming that is primarily caused by fossil fuel consumption and land use changes (often changes to Indigenous lands by non-Indigenous peoples). As I have demonstrated elsewhere (Greaves 2016a, 2016b), Indigenous peoples’ security claims are either silenced through the marginalization of their voices and the exclusion of their core issues of concern from security discourse, or subsumed through formulations of national security that incorporate nondominant groups into the political community represented by and through the sovereign state. This occurs

even though Indigenous peoples are represented by organized and legitimate political actors with high degrees of social capital who employ security language to identify specific threats to human and nonhuman survival and well-being.

Indigenous peoples have also been largely absent from the academic fields of international relations (IR) and security studies (Epp 2000; King 2017; Shaw 2002). IR scholarship rarely mentions Indigenous peoples in relation to security, with limited exceptions. Neta Crawford's (1994) study of the Iroquois Great Law of Peace as an example of a security regime is widely cited and has generated important discussions about indigeneity and IR (Bedford and Workman 1997; Crawford 2017). Indigenous peoples in the Southwestern United States are discussed in the context of harms associated with the development of the atomic bomb and subsequent nuclear testing (Laffey and Nadarajah 2016), and some postcolonial approaches to security examine Indigenous peoples as sovereign nations with distinct cosmologies, political systems, and diplomatic practices (Beier 2005, 2010, 2016). Indigenous peoples receive greater attention in some regional area studies, such as in the Arctic, though the unique salience of Indigenous peoples to circumpolar politics makes this an outlier (Abele and Rodon 2007; Greaves 2016a, 2016b; Nickels 2013; Shadian 2010; H. Smith 2010; Wilson 2007). Most recent scholarship linking security and Indigenous peoples focuses on Indigenous peoples as threats to the interests of settler colonial states (Bland 2014), or on the governmental tactics of criminalization, surveillance, and police and paramilitary violence that have been employed against them (Bell and Schreiner 2018; Crosby and Monaghan 2012, 2016; Pasternak et al. 2013). Some critical perspectives on IR explore the security interests and ontologies of subaltern groups in the Global South with little examination of Indigenous peoples within the Global North (Barkawi and Laffey 2006), or alternatively study the problematic implications of Indigenous politics for the foreign policies of settler states (Lackenbauer and Cooper 2007). But there is minimal inquiry into what security means to Indigenous peoples or why security claims made by Indigenous peoples have been ineffective at generating policy change. Given the ongoing, and in some instances worsening, nature of the threats facing Indigenous peoples as a result of state action and inaction, investigating the politics that underpin Indigenous peoples' security claims is important for assessing the current and future prospects of contested environmental politics globally.

This article theorizes why security claims articulated by Indigenous peoples fail to be accepted by government authorities or become incorporated into the security policies and practices of the states in which they reside. By engaging the concepts of securitization and ontological security, I account for how Indigenous peoples are prevented from being able to successfully "speak" security to the state. I argue that nondominant social groups that articulate threats originating from the dominant society or state institutions are unable to gain acceptance for security issues that challenge the dominant societal identity. In effect, Indigenous peoples' security claims challenge the ontological security, or national sense of self, of settler societies by identifying the state and dominant society as the source of their insecurity. Indigenous identity thus acts as an inhibiting condition for the acceptance of their security claims. Given the ontological relationship to land that underpins Indigenous identities and worldviews, and the incommensurability between Indigenous and settler claims to authority over land that is central to settler colonialism, this inhibiting condition is especially relevant with respect to security claims in relation to the natural environment. In addition to contributing to the inclusion of Indigenous peoples within IR and security studies, this article intervenes in debates around "securitizing" high stakes political issues, like environmental damage, through the use of security language and discourse. The argument has implications for the advocacy strategies of nondominant groups engaged in struggles for environmental and social justice, and suggests that alternative discourses centered on justice or sustainability may provide better avenues for political and policy change.

## Constructing Security Threats

### *Securitization, Identity, and Power*

The meaning of security is always contextual, ambiguous, and inherently political. Security is a “contested concept” for which “no neutral definition is possible . . . [because] any meaning depends upon and in turn supports a specific view of politics. . . . All definitions are theory-dependent, and all definitions reflect normative commitments” (S. Smith 2005: 27–28). Security is contested precisely because it is a powerful social and political signifier; how it is defined and enacted reflects who enjoys the protection offered by the sovereign power and who does not. “The very act of defining security and making a claim for that definition is an act of power, supporting the politics that depend on that definition, or making a normative claim for why security ought to be defined in a particular way” (Hooigsen Gjørvi et al. 2014: 2). Therefore, critical approaches to security must reckon with security claims that have not succeeded, namely security issues that are denied or ignored by the power holders who ultimately determine which issues institutions and public policy prioritize their resources to address.

Securitization theory is a prominent and compelling framework for explaining the process through which security threats are socially constructed (Balzacq 2011; Wæver et al. 1998). Securitization explains how issues become designated as *security* issues through the intersubjective (re)production of certain phenomena as threatening (Wæver et al. 1998: 35). This occurs when an actor employs security language—security, insecurity, threat, danger, existence, survival—to claim that something threatens the existence or well-being of a specific referent object. This security claim, called a securitizing move, transforms into a successful securitization when it is accepted by an authoritative audience with the power to respond to the threat, usually though not necessarily the sovereign state. Once accepted, a securitizing move shifts the issue from the realm of “normal politics” in which actors are bound by rules of appropriate political conduct into the realm of security politics, whereby the sovereign is authorized to use exceptional measures to defend the object that is threatened. The shift from politicized to securitized elevates the specified issue to the apex of political priority, and denotes an official recognition of its perceived importance. By making a securitizing move, an actor seeks to mobilize the political and material resources necessary to defend a referent object, and elevate the threat-referent relationship to the highest level of priority within a particular political context.

Successful securitization is structured by three “facilitating conditions”: use of security language, the authority and social capital of the securitizing actor, and the features of the alleged threat (Wæver et al. 1998: 33). These factors shape whether an existential threat is invoked, whether an actor is heard, and whether a phenomenon can be credibly depicted as security relevant. Facilitating conditions are the subject of important debates within securitization theory because they imply that the “social magic” of securitization results from the interaction between conditions that are both internal and external to the speech act itself (Balzacq 2011; Stritzel 2007). True to the Austinian language theory on which it is based, securitization considers language to have social power only when spoken by an appropriate speaker under the right conditions. Understandings of security—as reflected in those security claims that are acknowledged and enacted into public policy—are thus determined through the confluence of facilitating conditions that support a particular meaning within a given political context.

Consequently, identity is a crucial variable for securitization, which as a “structured field” is characterized by unequal “social power” that shapes actors’ capacities to successfully securitize issues (Balzacq 2005: 190–191; Wæver et al. 1998: 3). The identity of a secu-

ritizing actor operates “as a catalyst or gate-keeper in accepting a particular idea as a threat” (Sjöstedt 2013: 153), but identity is also key for securitization because it affects how certain identity groups experience security threats (Hoogensen and Rottem 2004) and whose securitizing moves can succeed (Hayes 2012). In short, identity matters for securitization because it mediates power, defined as “the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate . . . the capacities of actors to determine the conditions of their existence” (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42). In the remainder of this article, I argue that groups with oppositional, antagonistic, or threatening identities to the authoritative audience will have their security claims precluded from securitization success. I call this securitization nondominance: social groups who are structurally inhibited in their ability to successfully speak, write, or perform securitizing moves. Dominant groups will not always have their security claims accepted, but securitizing moves made by or on behalf of nondominant groups will systematically fail because of the social relations between the dominant society, state institutions, and the group the speaker represents. Securitization nondominance thus reflects broader forms of societal nondominance as they pertain to the ability to construct security issues within public policy and generate an adequate government response. Since “to ‘securitize’ an issue . . . [is] to challenge society to promote it higher in its scales of values and to commit greater resources to solving the related problems” (Sheehan 2005: 52), the question is why security issues articulated by Indigenous peoples are consistently unable to attain the highest level of political priority. In the next section, I outline this argument with reference to Indigenous peoples, though securitization nondominance may also apply to gendered, racialized, or classed social actors depending on how the dominant societal identity is constructed within their specific political contexts.

### *Nondominance and Ontological Security*

What is nondominance, and how does it result in the exclusion of certain groups’ security claims? Nondominance results from the limitation or absence of power and is a social phenomenon reflected in every society. Since power produces “effects [that] work to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others” (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42), groups experience poverty, prejudice, injustice, disenfranchisement, and violence by virtue of their structurally determined subordinate, marginal, or liminal societal positions.<sup>2</sup> Nondominance is constituted in various ways, and not all forms of nondominance are relevant to securitization, nor do all nondominant groups make security claims. However, the relationship between power and nondominance is important for the construction of security issues because it influences who is able to contribute, and in what ways, to public discourse: “Relations of dominance and nondominance determine who defines norms and practices and who must follow them; who is important and who is not; who defines the parameters of the debate and who does not; who is valuable and who is not” (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006: 219).

Depending on the kinds and specificity of social relations through which it operates, power can directly (compulsory power) or indirectly (institutional power) force actors to behave a particular way, and it can directly (structural power) or indirectly (productive power) shape the constitutive relationships and subject positions of social actors in ways that influence their political behavior (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 43). Any form of power can translate into systematic restrictions on a group’s ability to influence government policy, and all four types structure relations between nondominant groups and state institutions. However, in contemporary democratic societies—which includes settler colonial states such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Israel, and the United States—securitization



nondominance is most commonly (re)produced through structural and institutional forms of power, since structural power constitutes particular groups in unequal relations to each other—for instance, capital-labor, master-slave, and Indigenous-settler dichotomies—and institutional power accounts for how interactions between social actors are mediated through “long-standing institutions [that] represent frozen configurations of privilege and bias that can continue to shape the future choices of actors” (52).

Understanding that power generates unequal, and often unjust, relations between dominant and nondominant groups does not, in itself, explain why those groups would be unable to advance security claims against the state. For instance, however contested and incomplete, since the mid-twentieth century, Indigenous peoples in North America and Australasia have challenged their states by demanding recognition of their inherent, constitutional, and treaty-based rights. The official acknowledgments and concessions they have received, while often incomplete and reluctantly granted, signify a positive expansion of democratic inclusion for these historically oppressed and marginalized groups. The promulgation of constitutional and statutory changes have inaugurated a new era in which Indigenous peoples are often seen as “citizens plus”: entitled to civil, political, and cultural rights as citizens and additionally through constitutional documents and treaties with the Crown or federal government (Cairns 2001; Maaka and Fleras 2005). Thus, the argument presented here that Indigenous peoples are structurally unable to successfully advance their security claims is not self-evident and must be effectively theorized.

Therefore, a final conceptual building block of the theory developed here is ontological security, which I use to refer to a stable sense of self-identity. Jennifer Mitzen (2006: 342) explains that “ontological security refers to the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time—as being rather than constantly changing—in order to realize a sense of agency. Individuals need to feel secure in who they are, as identities or selves. Some deep forms of uncertainty threaten this identity security.” Actors maintain the integrity of how they view themselves and their place in the world as a means of providing cognitive stability in an unpredictable environment, even if doing so means adhering to pathological aspects of individual or collective identity. Mitzen employs the concept to provide a constructivist account of the role of state identity in the production and maintenance of security dilemmas, but her insights offer three useful applications for the argument made here: (1) states, as the political reflection of their dominant societal groups, possess identities which they can perceive as threatened; (2) these identities are established through routinized relations of amity and enmity between different societal groups; (3) and “assuming that states seek ontological security provides a sociological basis for understanding why we might see different decision-makers acting similarly over time” (353). In other words, ontological security seeking provides an explanation for continuities in state behavior even as individual leaders and other circumstances change. The assumption that states seek ontological security even when doing so perpetuates harmful consequences provides a lynchpin for explaining why security claims made by certain nondominant groups are precluded from securitization success.

Efforts to secure collective identities against various forms of social change are a prominent theme in securitization studies (Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2000; Ibrahim 2005; Roe 2004; Wæver et al. 1993). Identifying threats to an essentialized communal identity is an effective tool for promoting that very identity: “Threats to identity are thus always a question of the *construction* of something as threatening some ‘we’—and often thereby actually contributing to the construction or reproduction of ‘us’” (Wæver et al. 1998: 120). Labeling outsiders is an essential component of delineating membership in social groups because humans understand who they are by rejecting what they are not; as David Campbell (1998: 9) notes, “identity is constituted in relation to difference.” While the parameters of social groups are mutable, they are still policed as part of maintaining large-scale collective identities that

are only ever, after all, “imagined communities” based on the shared belief in common membership (Anderson 2006). Mitzen outlines how the need for collective identity drives cognitive efforts to maintain ontological security based, in large part, on distinguishing one’s own group from others:

One important way that groups maintain distinctiveness is by routinizing their relationships to other groups. Such inter-societal routines help maintain identity coherence for each group, which in turn provides individuals with a measure of ontological security. From here it is only a short step to argue that the states themselves act at least “as if” they are ontological security-seekers. Because losing a sense of state distinctiveness would threaten the ontological security of its members, states can be seen as motivated to preserve the national group identity and not simply the national “body” [territory]. (2006: 352)

In sum, the pursuit of ontological security is a powerful force in the construction and preservation of collective identities, and states are one of the principal vehicles through which such identities are expressed. No state has a single, monolithic collective identity, but most states do possess a group that is demographically, culturally, or politically dominant within its territory and institutions and which can thus mobilize these in its own defense. Threats to the dominant identity may originate from outside the state’s territory—whether from outsiders or amorphous forces such as economic or cultural globalization—or from within. The need to maintain the dominant group’s ontological security explains the systematic failure of nondominant groups’ security claims. Below, I apply this theoretical approach to explain the inability of Indigenous political actors to successfully securitize threats to their collective survival and well-being.

## Indigenous Threats to Settler Ontological Security

### *Settler Societies and Indigenous Nondominance*

Settler colonial states are complex and diverse polities with many differences between them, and in many respects they resist easy categorization. However, a state’s “type” can be identified based on the features that underpin its national identity, and the consequent “role identity” the state’s dominant society has of itself that must be preserved for ontological security to be maintained. These categorizations are not immutable, since “state identities or types are constituted and sustained by social relationships rather than being intrinsic properties of the states themselves” (Mitzen 2006: 354; Campbell 1998: 9–10). But the identifying features of states do not solely exist within the minds of their citizens, nor can they be separated from how those states behave. In this respect, a defining characteristic of contemporary settler colonial societies is that they were founded by European colonizers on Indigenous territories acquired through processes of settlement, dispossession of land, treaty violations, disenfranchisement, forcible relocation, segregation, coercive assimilation, and other forms of direct and structural violence resulting in the physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Maaka and Fleras 2005; TRC 2015). This resulted in the establishment of polities in which European settlers and their descendants, supplemented by enslaved and/or immigrant labor from elsewhere in the world, built social, political, and economic systems premised on their superiority over the peoples who had originally resided there. These settler states are constituted in contrast to preexisting Indigenous societies on the same territories: “Indigenous peoples are outside the ‘we-ness’ that allows others—settlers—to belong” (Hanrahan 2017: 72). In this context, “applying the settler label does not imply a moral or ethical judgement; rather, it is a descriptive term that

recognizes the historical and contemporary realities of imperialism that very clearly separate the lives of Indigenous peoples from the lives of later-comers” (Barker 2009: 329). In the most foundational sense, settler colonial societies reflect the dominance of white settlers over Indigenous peoples.

The basic difference still afforded the interests, rights, and worldviews of settlers and Indigenous peoples demonstrates that settler colonialism is not a historical phenomenon but an ongoing reality; as Patrick Wolfe (2006: 388) famously observed, “settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure, not an event.” To be sure, there have been substantial achievements for Indigenous peoples in pursuing their legal and political rights both globally and domestically. In the past two decades, the creation of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, adoption of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, judicial rulings favoring Indigenous rights to title over land, and assorted moves toward recognition and reparations for colonial wrongs all signify the reassertion of Indigenous political agency. But the terms of this inclusion remain constrained by the interests and actions of settler states. As a result, while “the most egregious expressions of colonialism have been discredited . . . what remained untouched are those ‘colonial agendas’ that have had a controlling (systemic) effect in privileging national (white) interests at the expense of indigenous rights” (Maaka and Fleras 2005: 12). Despite some progress toward acknowledging and respecting Indigenous rights, the relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler states remain structured by the dominance of settler colonial values, institutions, and interests.

Indigeneity is constitutive of material and ideational forms of nondominance for Indigenous peoples within white-majority settler societies. The material reflections of political nondominance include lower qualities of life, forms of governmental control, and restrictions on Indigenous peoples’ rights and autonomy resulting from “the demoralising effects of dispossession, forced removals, open racism and discrimination, and destruction of language, identity, and culture” (Maaka and Fleras 2005: 26). Less overt but more pernicious is the ideational nondominance that discredits Indigenous forms of knowledge production, privileges settler colonial legal and political systems, and marginalizes Indigenous values and worldviews. Indigenous knowledges have long been subjected to concerted efforts at destruction, erasure, and forgetting because they were seen as threatening colonial order. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999: 29) has observed, “the negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly ‘primitive’ and ‘incorrect’ and mostly because they challenged and resisted the vision of colonization.” This included depriving Indigenous systems of knowledge and social organization of the legitimacy to challenge settler institutions by subjecting them to alien standards of colonial law and morality, preventing their transmission to younger generations, and co-opting them into settler colonial decision-making processes and academic research. The result has been the discrediting of the scientific validity, legal weight, and moral worth of Indigenous knowledge precisely on the basis of its difference from settler colonial/scientific rationalist modes of thought and action.

The form of nondominance relevant here pertains to the systemic restrictions on Indigenous peoples’ ability to have their security claims accepted by the state. The reason for this is straightforward: the authoritative audiences that must accept these security claims are not neutral actors but rather settler colonial institutions that principally represent the dominant settler population. When nondominant actors articulate their concerns as security issues, the relationship between securitizing actor and audience is not impartial, but between colonized and colonizer, racialized Indigenous speaker and white settler audience. The process of securitization is occurring in a context of unequal power and social capital, violent historical legacies, and ongoing discrimination that structure relations between Indigenous

people and settlers. This is compounded by the fact that Indigenous security claims position the settler state itself as a principal or contributing source of the threats they face. For a settler audience to accept those securitizing moves would require acknowledging their role in the constitution of insecurity for Indigenous peoples.

For democratic settler societies, this directly challenges their national sense of self, since “where there is significant disenfranchisement it can be said that there is also a challenge to the authority and sovereign legitimacy of the state. This is especially so when the state itself is in some essence understandable as a threat to the security and well being of those who are disenfranchised” (Beier 2010: 179). Values such as juridical equality, pluralism, social inclusion, and minority rights are central to the “type” of state that identifies as a “democracy,” so acknowledging claims that the state itself—in pursuing or protecting the rights, interests, and property of the dominant societal group—produces threats to the security of its Indigenous citizens would compromise core features of a democratic society’s self-understanding. “Society solves its members’ ontological security problem for them, since society is a shared cognitive ordering of the environment. . . . But society is no more than the social practices its members engage in” (Mitzen 2006: 349). This means that so long as relations between settlers and Indigenous people remain structured by racial inequality, institutional and individual discrimination, and the fundamental privileging of Eurocentric identities and interests, ontological security requires rejecting claims made against society that identify such structures, practices, and attitudes as producing insecurity for nondominant groups.

Nondominance is integral to the collective historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples: it constitutes them as social actors, and widely informs definitions of indigeneity (Martínez Cobo 1986: para 379). However, some scholars also identify resistance to settler domination as a component of indigeneity. To Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005: 597), “it is this oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world.” Roger Maaka and Augie Fleras (2005: 9) claim that “[Indigenous] peoples share a common desire to transcend colonial mentalities, contest existing constitutional principles, challenge the normalisation of injustices within systems of power, and transform the structures of dominance that distort and disrupt.”

For Indigenous peoples who “derive much of their identity from histories of state-sponsored genocide, forced settlement, relocation, political marginalization, and various formal attempts at cultural destruction” (Niezen 2003: 5), resistance to nondominance is a defining feature of their identity. This suggests that to *be* Indigenous is to resist forms of settler political authority that have been imposed over Indigenous peoples in their own territories: indigeneity is premised on an oppositional relationship to the settler state. Since the domination of Indigenous peoples by settler colonial institutions constitutes the political salience of their indigeneity, the priority issues of Indigenous peoples, including those they designate as threats to their security, begin with resisting the assertion of the settler state’s authority over Indigenous lands. As Jaskiran Dhillon (2015: 25) explains in relation toward state-directed harms against Indigenous women and girls, if “the state is the chief perpetrator of violence in Indigenous nations, its institutions, agencies, and programs cannot be the place where justice is found, nor can strategies for eradicating colonial gender violence be rooted in these power structures.”

### *Incommensurability and the Question of Land*

The material and ideational forms of nondominance experienced by Indigenous peoples converge with respect to their relationships to land. Indeed, no question is more central

to Indigenous peoples and settler colonialism than who is authorized to decide how land is used: “land is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life. Thus, contests for land can be—indeed, often are—contests for life” (Wolfe 2006: 387). Indigenous scholars observe that settler colonialism rests on Eurocentric conceptions of land as sovereign territory and private property being imposed over Indigenous understandings of land “*as system of reciprocal relations and obligations* [that] can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in non-dominating and non-exploitive terms” (Coulthard 2014: 13). Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015: 19–20) notes how possession of land was necessary to constitute colonial sovereignty: “The British imperial project was predicated on taking possession of other peoples’ lands and resources for the benefit of Empire. . . . Property rights were derived from the Crown, which in the form of the nation-state holds possession. Possession and nationhood are thus constituted symbiotically.” Settler possession of land was integral to the colonial project of “eliminating the native” (Wolfe 2006) because indigeneity is based on an “ontological relationship to land . . . that the nation-state has sought to diminish through its social, legal, and cultural practices” (Moreton-Robinson 2015: 15). Thus, even when settler states have extended particular rights for Indigenous peoples to use (their own) land, it has been premised on the view that the land belongs to the state. Moreover, there are deeply held colonial assumptions about the validity of certain types of land use—such as construction of permanent settlements, natural resource extraction, and settler recreation—over others. Settler colonialism also remains uncomfortable with nonuse of land; under extractive capitalism, land that is not “in use” is economically unproductive and represents an asset capable of further exploitation.

The incommensurability of settler and Indigenous claims to land underpins securitization nondominance for Indigenous peoples within contemporary settler societies. The ontological security of settler populations depends on settler possession of, and state authority over, the territories that comprise these polities. Likewise, it relies on the use of land as the basis for industrial activities and natural resource extraction, as well as for establishing settler towns and cities that rely for their survival and economic prosperity on local ecological systems and globalized commercial flows of commodities, goods, and services. Settler modes of social, political, and economic organization are built on the presumption that the land is and should be subject to the imperatives of capitalist extraction mediated through Eurocentric modes of political sovereignty. Settler institutions and the dominant white society they represent thus require that decision-making power over Indigenous peoples’ traditional territories remain under settler political authority that considers its legitimacy to supersede Indigenous forms of governance and political organization. Furthermore, the fact that settler states such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Israel, and the United States also possess national identities as democracies is also inconsistent with a self-perception as being responsible for producing the insecurity of their respective Indigenous peoples. Thus, as Maura Hanrahan (2017: 73) observes, “Indigenous people present an existential threat to [settler] identity, this identity having been created around liberal democratic principles, possession of [land], and . . . resource extraction. To maintain . . . national identity and the activities that support it, Indigenous people have to be pushed to the figurative and literal fringes and rendered invisible.”

By contrast, Indigenous scholars emphasize how the survival of Indigenous lives and nations through individual and collective decolonization requires challenging these very structures of settler society. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012: 7) argue that “decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land. . . . That is, *all* the land, and not just symbolically. . . . Decolonization eliminates settler property rights and settler sovereignty. It requires the abolition of land as property and upholds the sover-

eignty of Native land and people . . . All land is repatriated and all settlers become landless” (2012: 26–27). Glen Coulthard (2014) and Maura Hanrahan (2017) also view the current structures of settler society as antithetical to the survival of Indigenous peoples. Settler capitalist economies have been built on the coercive dispossession of Indigenous territories in order to facilitate the ecologically unsustainable extraction of natural resources, and both practices are incompatible with Indigenous survival precisely because of their “ontological relationship to land” (Moreton-Robinson 2015: 15). Since Indigenous peoples only exist *as Indigenous* through systems of reciprocal relations with the land and all its human and nonhuman inhabitants, Coulthard (2014: 171–173) argues that “without such a massive change in the political economy of contemporary settler-colonialism, any efforts to rebuild our nations will remain parasitic on capitalism, and thus on the perpetual exploitation of our lands and labour . . . For Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die.” More than the presence of settlers on Indigenous territories, what is incommensurable with the survival and well-being of Indigenous peoples are the economic structures that settlers have established as the basis for their societies. But these structures now underpin the settler state’s national interests and settlers’ collective sense of self, meaning that the challenges leveled by Indigenous theoretical critiques and practical resistance are inherently threatening to the ontological security of contemporary settler colonial societies.

Furthermore, because Indigenous identities are ontologically connected to specific territories, changes to the land itself—particularly environmental damage that negatively impacts the health or viability of existing ecosystems—also affect Indigenous peoples’ collective identities. Changes to natural systems have profound impacts on the ability of Indigenous people to practice their cultures and interact in familiar ways with the landscape: “Cultural survival, identity and the very existence of Indigenous societies depend to a considerable degree on the maintenance of environmental quality. The degradation of the environment is therefore inseparable from a loss of culture and hence identity” (Cocklin 2002: 159). In this sense, threats to the environment also threaten Indigenous identities, which is precisely why Indigenous peoples have situated themselves, often disruptively, within political debates over the impacts of global climate change (Bravo 2009; Martello 2008; H. Smith 2007). Indigenous peoples recognize that changes to the environment stem in considerable part from their lack of political authority over land use in their ancestral territories. Human-caused environmental changes illustrate Indigenous nondominance in both its material and nonmaterial forms while simultaneously posing deep threats to the continued existence of Indigenous worldviews and ways of life.

In this respect, what is revealed is a profound gap between the conditions of existence that settlers and Indigenous peoples seek to secure. Ontological security for Indigenous and settler communities, respectively, is derived from fundamentally distinct ontologies, as most evident with respect to the treatment and use of land. Notwithstanding the growth of Western or settler discourses of environmental sustainability, or critiques of modern capitalism and the global ecological crisis it has produced (i.e., the Anthropocene), conceptions of land as kin and land as commodity are, indeed, incommensurable. Even if convergence or fruitful engagement between Indigenous and settler modes of thought with respect to the natural environment is possible (Todd 2016), the political and social realities of settler states remain built on structures of white racial superiority and extractive capitalism that are fundamentally challenged by the assertion of Indigenous understandings of, and authority over, land. Security discourses and specific securitizing moves that frame the damage to Indigenous lands and lives in terms of threats originating with settler society and the actions of the settler state thus run aground on the unequal power relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples. Security is a structured field, and the need for settlers to

defend their self-understanding as democratic and as *not* responsible for the conditions of global and local environmental harm effectively foreclose the capacity for Indigenous security claims to be accepted on their own terms.

### **Conclusion: Whose Security?**

In this article, I have theorized why security claims made by Indigenous peoples are excluded from the policies and practices of the settler colonial states in which they reside. I argue that Indigenous peoples, like other societally nondominant groups, are structurally constrained in their ability to successfully “speak” security, especially when they identify threats to their survival or well-being that originate from state institutions or the dominant society. The need to maintain the ontological security of the dominant (i.e., settler) society intervenes to impede acceptance of nondominant groups’ security claims, rendering nondominant identities an inhibiting condition for successful securitization. Given that settler colonialism is, at its root, a struggle for control over land, I suggest that the securitization inhibiting nature of indigeneity is particularly acute with respect to threats of environmental damage to the land itself. That is, Indigenous identities and practices based on relationships to particular territories are threatened by processes of settlement, resource extraction, and ecological disruption that are normalized under settler colonialism, such that it is impossible for Indigenous peoples to articulate these issues as security issues without implicating the dominant settler population and settler colonial institutions as the source of their insecurity. Rather than accept such claims, and thus both undermine their own professed economic interests and legitimize Indigenous critiques of the settler colonial project, the authoritative institutions of the settler state instead foreclose the possibility of securitization success through the systematic rejection of Indigenous securitizing moves.

The purpose of this article is neither to generalize across all Indigenous peoples nor to assert the existence of monolithic or essentialist Indigenous or settler identities. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that security discourse may be unavailable as a means of catalyzing state action or producing positive change in the lives of certain communities, even within democratic societies. Examining unsuccessful efforts to construct issues as security relevant helps to demonstrate the limits of what state institutions will countenance as security issues. Analytically, it reiterates the importance of examining the security concerns of sub-state groups that identify the state itself as their principal source of insecurity, especially within prosperous societies that are presumed to provide a general degree of security to their citizens as a public good. Security is an essential component of communal life, and the ability to securitize—not always to have one’s claims accepted, but at least to receive a fair hearing and have the opportunity for one’s claims to be accepted—denotes membership in a political community. The process of defining security “is so pivotal to the very purpose of community that at the level of self-identification it helps to construct and sustain our ‘we-feeling’—our very felt sense of ‘common publicness’” (Loader and Walker 2007: 164). It is the responsibility of governing authorities to provide security to their citizens, and if some groups are precluded from having their most serious concerns addressed, then they are excluded from that community in a vital way. By examining the inability of nondominant groups to successfully securitize issues of greatest importance to them, this analysis calls into question whether securitization is available as a process to advance political action on urgent challenges faced by all groups in a society.

While beyond the scope of this article to examine, this argument suggests that nondominant societal groups seeking to advance policy change on serious challenges facing them should consider carefully the utility of strategies that primarily appeal to elected policy

makers or state institutions that are electorally accountable to the dominant societal group. Successful mobilization of security discourse may be unavailable, such that attempting to securitize even those issues relevant to their very survival will offer little prospect of political success. While this argument may be generalized to other nondominant groups, it appears particularly salient for Indigenous peoples. Indeed, if Indigenous and decolonial scholars are correct that “eliminating the native” (Wolfe 2006) is the ultimate goal of the settler state, then there is actually a specifically perverse incentive for state authorities *not* to act on Indigenous peoples’ security claims. Threats to Indigenous peoples may weaken their capacity to claim or assert self-determination in ways that challenge the assertion of settler sovereignty. Likewise, environmental threats due to natural resource extraction simultaneously undermine Indigenous peoples’ connections to the land by degrading the natural environment while promoting the settler state’s dual purposes of assimilating Indigenous peoples by making them reliant on the state for subsistence and providing the natural resources sought by the settler capitalist economy.

By contrast, security discourse and securitization are not the only ways for nondominant groups to frame their concerns. Other discourses, institutions, and mechanisms exist for Indigenous peoples and other nondominant groups to pursue redress or effective policy responses. Rather than “security,” discourses of sustainability, resilience, morality, or justice that possess different logics and means of appealing to an audience offer alternate possibilities for catalyzing a response to environmental and other harms facing Indigenous peoples. Practically, pursuing legal action has produced significant gains for Indigenous peoples, including with specific respect to the question of Indigenous title over land and consultation and consent over land use in traditional territories. Jurisprudence—such as *New Zealand Māori Council v. Attorney-General* in Aotearoa New Zealand, and *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia* and *Clyde River (Hamlet) v. Petroleum Geo-Services Inc.* in Canada—has been far more significant in terms of defending the interests of Indigenous peoples against state power than attempted securitization.

If Indigenous peoples choose to work with and through settler institutions, it would seem that the legal system offers more welcoming terrain than the structurally inhibited pursuit of securitization. This implication is particularly relevant given the considerable effort expended by Indigenous peoples and their institutions in articulating their priorities as security concerns in order to mobilize an adequate state response. But insofar as claims made to or through settler legal systems are subject to similar structural problems such as the presumption of settler sovereignty to determine legal disputes, the possibilities for radical emancipation or Indigenous self-determination is unlikely to be realized through the courts either. In the end, the survival and well-being of Indigenous peoples—whether framed in terms of security, rights, resilience, or some other central concept—will continue to rest primarily on Indigenous communities asserting their interests through a variety of means, including direct action and civil disobedience, rather than seeking state recognition (Coulthard 2014). Indeed, some of the most important breakthroughs for Indigenous negotiations with the state have occurred after direct action by Indigenous peoples in defense of their territory (Belanger and Lackenbauer 2015).

Overall, despite some areas of progress toward Indigenous rights and self-determination within settler societies, I argue that there remain fundamental ways in which Indigenous peoples are unable to successfully advance security claims against the state. The incommensurability of settler and Indigenous peoples’ security interests as they are currently constituted, rooted in contested authority over physical territories claimed by both groups, means that claims based on non-security discourses may ultimately be more effective at generating political changes favorable to the continued survival of Indigenous peoples. Regrettably, the use of security discourse has failed to make Indigenous peoples more secure in the face of



settler imposition and ongoing degradation of the natural environment on which they rely. Environmental change on Indigenous territories as a result of both industrial activities and climate change will continue to worsen; the question, therefore, is how will Indigenous peoples (and others) respond and which strategies will prove most effective at securing a sustainable future. Invoking security, it appears, is not the answer.

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## ■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article benefited greatly from the comments of two anonymous reviewers. It was principally written on the traditional territory of the Lkwungen-speaking peoples, and of the Songhees, Esquimalt and W-SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day, where I am grateful to live and work.

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## ■ NOTES

1. I use the term “Indigenous peoples” as defined by the Martínez Cobo study (1986: para. 379): “Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with preinvasion and precolonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present nondominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.” “Indigenous” is thus a broad category incorporating a diverse, heterogeneous array of peoples around the world who share experiences of dispossession and colonial violence.
2. This article positions Indigenous people as nondominant based on their relative power and agency within the settler state. This argument provokes the question of whether indigeneity and subalternity are similar subject positions relative to colonial power (see Byrd and Rothberg 2011). As I understand it, subalternity positions the subject on the terrain of the powerful and within the context of colonial structures (Spivak 1988), whereas indigeneity defines itself as incommensurable with, not subordinate to, settler colonial power. But notwithstanding the specificity and nuance of Indigenous experiences vis-à-vis those of subaltern groups (for instance, Spivak focuses on Indians under British colonialism), Indigenous peoples by definition occupy structural and institutional positions that have been disempowered by the settler state (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 25–35). As described in the remainder of this article, this relative lack of power is constitutive of indigeneity under settler colonialism.

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## CHAPTER 8

# Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice

*Kyle Whyte*

Diverse persons, including scholars, writers and activists, have described settler colonial domination as violence that disrupts human relationships with the environment. Lee Maracle writes that “violence to earth and violence between humans are connected” (2015: 53). Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang discuss how “the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence” (2012: 5). Vanessa Watts claims that “the measure of colonial interaction with land has historically been one of violence . . . where land is to be accessed, not learned from or a part of” (2013: 26). The Women’s Earth Alliance and The Native Youth Sexual Health Network recently produced a report entitled *Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies: Building an Indigenous Response to Environmental Violence*. The report states that colonially supported extractive industries create “devastating impacts of environmental violence” (WEA and NYSHN 2016). J.M. Bacon refers to “colonial ecological violence” as a process of “disrupt[ing] Indigenous eco-social relations” (2018: 1).

I seek to investigate philosophically one dimension of how settler colonialism commits environmental injustice through the violent disruption of human relationships to the environment. The dimension concerns how settler colonialism works strategically to undermine Indigenous peoples’ social resilience as self-determining collectives. Engaging Anishinaabe (Neshnabé) intellectual traditions, I will offer an Indigenous conception of social resilience and self-determination that, for short, I will call collective continuance. I will then show how settler colonialism commits environmental injustice through strategically undermining Indigenous collective continuance. Using this understanding of environmental injustice, I will conclude by showing how settler colonialism engenders at least

two kinds of environmental injustices against Indigenous peoples: (1) vicious sedimentation and (2) insidious loops.

While my starting point of analysis is anti-Indigenous violence that disrupts human relationships with the environment, I am not attempting here to define absolutely what such violence is or entails. I am also not trying to create the single theory of environmental injustice that can somehow explain every wrongdoing. The theory offered here in outline seeks only compatibility and complementarity with a variety of other approaches to violence and injustice that are well argued for across Indigenous studies and related fields, such as settler colonial studies and critical environmental justice studies. I will also isolate US settler colonial domination for analytic purposes in this article, especially the oppressive relationship between US settler populations and Indigenous populations. The theory I will offer here should, when further elaborated elsewhere, be able to connect to more complex, intersectional, and globally integrated accounts of ecological domination within, before, and beyond US settler colonialism.

## Collective Continuance and Ecology

### *Interdependence, Systems of Responsibilities and Migration*

Human and environmental relationships have many possible values, including, among others, spirituality, sustainability, senses of place or home, and communion with nonhumans. I will describe a theory of value that I have developed out of my own embeddedness in a range of traditions. Here I will focus on a slice of the studies and voices of Anishinaabe peoples that have shaped my thinking as a Potawatomi scholar, activist, relative, citizen, and community member. I will describe one value, which I will refer as collective continuance, by connecting three concepts in Anishinaabe intellectual traditions: (1) interdependent relationships (or interdependence), (2) systems of responsibilities, and (3) migration. The theory of collective continuance I will develop combines these concepts to suggest a value that is similar to social resilience in its relationship to self-determination.

In saying Anishinaabe peoples, I am invoking broad intellectual traditions connecting Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Odawa, and Mississauga and related peoples who have diverse contemporary and ancient linguistic, cultural, social, and political connections. These intellectual traditions often occur in contexts connected to and in dialogue with neighboring peoples, including the Menominee, Miami, Haudenosaunee and numerous others. While I will use Anishinaabe for short here, I caution that the diversity of Anishinaabe peoples means that there is a whole range of inquiries and studies for which it is inappropriate to use such a broad designator (or English-language spelling) as Anishinaabe. Throughout this section, I will use the term “the environment” to reference many different relationships connecting human and nonhuman living beings (plants, animals, persons, insects), non-living beings and entities (spirits, elements), and collectives (e.g., forests, watersheds). The environment is not a precise or culturally accurate term, though for reasons of space, I will rely on it.

To begin with, the first concept is interdependence. Going back to the nineteenth century and earlier, Anishinaabe responses to US-settlement-invoked concepts of interdependence with the environment. D. Ezra Miller has researched how in the Treaty of October 23, 1826 with the Miami Tribe, one Potawatomi leader, Awbanawben, told the following to US settlers in a speech: “You said we could not stay here. We would perish. But what will perish [?] But what will destroy us [?] It is yourselves destroying us. . . You trampled on our soil, and drove it away. Before you came, the game was plenty, but you drove it away. . . You point

to a country for us in the west, where there is game . . . but the Great Spirit has made and put men there who have a right to that game and it is not ours” (Miller 2016).

Awbanawben, in nineteenth-century rhetoric, is concerned about interdependence of humans and nonhumans in ecosystems. US settlement is viewed as violating these relationships, for Potawatomi but also peoples who will be displaced by any Potawatomi relocation processes imposed by the US. While in the nineteenth century many different people referred to the importance of game or good farming conditions, I can just note here that Awbanawben clearly identifies how particular human societies are entangled in relationships of interdependence with the environment and have habituated themselves to particular ecosystems.

Diverse sources of Anishinaabe intellectual and artistic traditions bring out different senses of interdependence. Louise Erdrich, in *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country*, writes of how for the late Tobasonakwut, an Anishinaabe elder, “His people were the lake, and the lake was them. . . . As the people lived off fish, animals, the lake’s water and water plants for medicine, they were literally cell by cell composed of the lake and the lake’s islands” (Erdrich 2006: 34). Robin Kimmerer calls relationships of interdependence the “covenant of reciprocity,” which refers to relationships organized among relatives who have gift-giving and gift-receiving responsibilities to each other: “In Potawatomi, we speak of the land as *emingoyak*, ‘that which has been given to us,’ a gift that must be reciprocated with our own” (2010: 143–144).

Aimée Craft has analyzed the newspaper accounts of the 1871 negotiations of Treaty 1 involving Anishinaabe, Cree and Canadian representatives. Craft writes that “Chief Ayeeta-pe-pe-tung spoke to the Queen’s negotiators about his ‘ownership’ and his view that rather than owning it, he was *made of the land*” (Craft 2014, 16). Megan Bang and Douglas Medin describe research they have been involved in in the Great Lakes with members of the Menominee Tribe and the Chicago urban Indian community. Based on these studies, they suggest that “Native parents said they want their children to realize that they are part of nature . . . were also more likely to mention . . . the idea that no creation is more important than or ‘above’ any other creature” (2010: 10).

The concept of interdependence includes a sense of identity associated with the environment and a sense of responsibility to care for the environment. There is also no privileging of humans as unique in having agency or intelligence, so one’s identity and caretaking responsibility *as a human* includes the philosophy that nonhumans have their own agency, spirituality, knowledge, and intelligence. Potawatomi people, in daily speech, often say that nonhumans have the capacity for knowledge but humans really do not (Kimmerer 2013). Thus, humans ought to take responsibility to be respectful of nonhuman ways of knowing. In my experiences, some Anishinaabe persons identify primarily through non-human identities, such as clan identities (e.g., crane, bear, turtle). Heidi Bohaker shows the importance of *nindoodemag* (clan identities) for Anishinaabe historically. Bohaker describes them as “kinship networks” where people “conceived of themselves as related to and having kin obligations toward those who shared the other-than-human progenitor being.” Nindoodemag networks were crucial for “social and political life . . . [they] shaped marriage and alliance patterns and facilitated long distance travel; access to community resources . . . [and] operated as an important component of Anishinaabe collective identities” (Bohaker 2006, 25–29).

So at least for some Anishinaabe persons historically and today, it is not necessarily true that such an identity as “the human” as a distinct or uniquely rational or knowledgeable type of being even exists. In these ways, interdependence can be thought of as intrinsically valuable. Interdependence is a source of identity for how humans understand whom and what they are in the world, but the concept of interdependence is also instrumentally



valuable. For interdependence is also a means to motivate humans to exercise their caretaking responsibilities to their relatives, human and nonhuman, which helps motivate these relatives to exercise their reciprocal responsibilities to nourish and support one another in diverse ways.

Interdependence highlights reciprocity or mutuality between humans and the environment as a central feature of existence. In Anishinaabe traditions, reciprocity is also systematized. That is, environmental identities and responsibilities are coordinated with one another through complex social, cultural, economic, and political institutions. Interdependence suggests a much larger system of “reciprocities” that characterize many hundreds of relationships of interlocking/intersecting relationships across entire societies. The second concept, then, is “systems of responsibility,” in which responsibility refers to relationships with reciprocal expectations.

Deborah McGregor, in her work with Josephine Mandamin and Anishinaabe women’s water movements, discusses how to think systematically about the different lives that water supports. Water supports “plants/medicines, animals, people, birds, etc.” and—reciprocally—there is “the life that supports water (e.g., the earth, the rain, the fish).” The system is based on responsibilities such that “water has a role and a responsibility to fulfil, just as people do” (2009: 37–38). McGregor writes that “All beings have responsibilities to fulfill, and recognizing this contributes to a holistic understanding of justice. Our interference with other beings’ ability to fulfil their responsibilities is an example of a great environmental injustice, an injustice to Creation” (40). McGregor’s writing opens onto philosophizing about larger coordinated networks of responsibilities that ought to constitute Anishinaabe institutions.

Brenda Child describes systems of responsibilities through interpreting anthropologist Frances Densmore’s work with Nodinens, an elder. Child describes how Ojibwe peoples “lived according to a seasonal round, each year taking advantage of opportunities to hunt, fish, farm, and gather wild foods in a highly systematic way of life.” For Child, the seasonal round is not an accidental arrangement of responsibilities: “It was a way of life passed down by the generations and required study, observation of the natural world, experimentation, relationships with other living beings on the earth, and knowledge-generating labor” (2012: 30). A “seasonal round” is a type of governance in which the major social, cultural, economic, and political institutions of a society shift in shape, size, and organizational structure throughout the year. Child’s reference to “relationships” connects to the responsibilities described by McGregor. Child highlights that morality, knowledge and inquiry, and labor are systematically coordinated in the seasonal round.

Gender is another way to understand Anishinaabe systems of responsibility. People who today code as women exercised a range of leadership roles, whether as knowledge keepers (experts) of particular plants and animals, visible leaders and diplomats, or servant leaders (such as a through participation on committees tasked with selecting visible leaders) (Sleeper-Smith 2001; White 1991). Historians, including Child (2012), Susan Sleeper-Smith (2001), Jean O’Brien (1997), and Richard White (1992), describe Anishinaabe and broader Algonquian gender and kinship relationships for women as focused less around obligations confined to roles in patriarchal marriages and focused more around multifarious and diverse responsibilities to their parents, siblings, grandparents, clan members, members of other social units (e.g., lodges, bands, etc.) and trading partners from other societies.

Perhaps most significantly, Anishinaabe intellectual traditions do not emphasize a binary gender system, but rather embrace gender diversity and fluidity. According to Margaret Noodin, “Anishinaabe language and culture acknowledge gender difference, but in a way that relies on choice and context rather than fixed and predictable rules” (2014: 12). Niigaan Sinclair has written about Ozawwendib, an Anishinaabe and Two-Spirit person

who lived in the early 1800s. In the record, especially but not exclusively from the perspectives of settlers, this person's behavior broached and mixed many binary gender norms. Sinclair discusses how Ozawwendib nonetheless "appeared to live without shame, apology, and fear" in their society and was among the most respected experts in environmental skills and knowledge (2016: 14).

Sleeper-Smith's (2005) work shows what I interpret as the U.S. introducing patriarchy and sexism to disrupt trust, consent, and diplomacy in their interactions with Anishinaabe peoples. Sinclair's (2016) work shows the overt sexism, gender discrimination, and discomfort of US and Canadian settlers who responded to Ozawwendib's gender and sexuality. These norms, tied to binary assumptions about gender, formed a stark contrast between the complex and multifarious responsibilities, relationships, and leadership positions to which many Anishinaabe women and persons of nonbinary genders were accustomed. Though here I want to caution that, in presenting a theoretical account in this article, I am emphasizing what I take to be positive qualities of Anishinaabe gender systems in the absence of a more detailed discussion of gender oppressions that occurred in periods like the transatlantic fur trade, such as human trafficking.

Systems of responsibilities also involve government and diplomacy across different peoples. John Borrows claims: "Aboriginal peoples developed spiritual, political, and social conventions to guide their relationships with each other and with the natural environment. These customs and conventions became the foundation of many complex systems of government and law" (2002: 37). This idea, of course, is reflected in points cited earlier, such as references in McGregor's and Craft's work to how interdependence and systems of responsibilities are related to treaty-making (diplomacy) and justice. Leanne Simpson has supported reinvigorated interest in the Dish with One Spoon treaty between Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples in the Great Lakes region. Simpson writes that "*Gdoo-naaganimaa* [the dish] acknowledged that both the Nishnaabeg and the Haudenosaunee were eating out of the same dish through shared hunting territory and the ecological connections between their territories . . . both parties were to be responsible for taking care of the dish. . . . All of the nations involved had particular responsibilities to live up to in order to enjoy the rights of the agreement. Part of those responsibilities was taking care of the dish" (2008: 37).

Migration is the next concept I will discuss having now discussed interdependent relationships and systems of responsibilities. Anishinaabe philosophies often involve migratory themes such as constant motion, change, transformation, mobility, and adjustment. However, I would like to note that the following discussion of migration is not intended to normalize one particular type of mobility, which would be morally problematic. Instead, I seek to discuss how societies can be organized to best adjust to the ecological and social dynamics they face. Migration suggests that relationships of interdependence and systems of responsibility are not grounded on stable or static relationships with the environment. Rather, these relationships arise from contexts of constant change and transformation. A key idea is that relationships that are constantly shifting do not sacrifice the possibility of continuity.

Michael Witgen (2011), for example, discusses the territory of Anishinaabewaki in the Great Lakes region during the transatlantic fur trade period. Anishinaabewaki was a place where people were connected to each other through diverse kin relationships rooted in particular ecosystems. Individual persons were actually complex identities associated with the *many* places where they engaged in economic and cultural activities throughout the year in their seasonal rounds associated with their nonhuman ancestors (i.e., clan memberships), families, bands/tribes, lodges, ceremonial communities, romantic ties, and diplomatic protocols. At a particular place and a particular time during the calendar year, someone might primarily be known as a "trader" or member of "clan y." But that was just that person's identity at that place and that time of year. Identity was always shifting.

Shifting identities and shifting governance authorities are a part of the seasonal round governance system. One version of the seasonal round is the 13 moons system articulated by many Anishinaabe authors. Depending on the community, moons usually have names and meanings that correspond to or indicate the particular combination of plants and animals that are monitored, harvested, stored, used, or consumed and recycled during those times. Particular lodges, clans, or other organizational units have different responsibilities for convening people in particular locations during those times of year to facilitate monitoring or harvesting. Instead of a central government, there are diverse family, band, lodge, clan, and other organizations whose authority and responsibilities change throughout the year.

Seasonal round governance expanded and contracted throughout the year so that social, cultural, economic, and political institutions were organized to approximate, as best possible, the seasonal dynamics of ecosystems. Ecosystems, of course, include the impacts of human social systems. Witgen (2011) cites and agrees with the anthropologist Regna Darnell (1998) that the seasonal round is an “accordion” system of governance in its constant spiral of expansion and contraction in response to change (see also Child 2012; Johnston 1976).

The philosophies behind the seasonal round involve migratory concepts such as transformation, cyclical time (in the sense of spiraling time), and shape-shifting. Heidi Stark writes: “The Anishinaabe transformed themselves, adapting to their ever-changing environment. Importantly, the stories maintained about Nenabozho often conveyed the importance of change. Anishinaabe nationhood has never been static or fixed. Indeed, no nation can or has survived without undergoing constant change” (2012: 124). Gerald Vizenor’s concept of “survivance” connotes continuity through constant change: “Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (1999: vii). Sinclair interprets Vizenor’s work as having direct implications for governance as constantly shifting. Sinclair writes that “transmotion is, in fact, a cultural, political, and historical Anishinaabeg method of continuance” (2009: 137), citing Vizenor’s articulation of transmotion in which Vizenor connects together the “natural right of motion” with the maintenance of “continuous sovereignty” (quoted in Sinclair 2013: 248)

Time is also understood as in motion. Kimberley Blaeser, in a conversation with Jennifer Andrews, writes about the philosophy of time involved in her work:

[KB] There’s the circular shape, but there’s also the lateral, the different strands on the spider’s web, and then I envision what happens when a fly lands and there’s a vibration. So we’re talking about the vibration, the motion, the movement, and I guess it’s that idea of being in the essence of movement that is in a continuum; we’re in a constant evolution and yet at the same time it reconnects us, and so it folds back, and maybe it’s like a . . .

[JA] An accordion.

[KB] Yeah! When you talk about a circle, you’re still restricting it to a single dimension. (Andrews and Blaeser 2007)

Spiral or accordion conceptions time (or temporality) can make transformation possible in different respects. Witgen (2011) discusses ceremonies in which different peoples transformed themselves into relatives in order to facilitate diplomacy. In one fur-trade era ceremony, Anishinaabe, Cree, and Dakota peoples buried the bones of their ancestors together to render themselves kin for the sake of coordinated collective action in response to the presence of European traders and settlers. Hence, kin is not just based on birth or biology, as Indigenous studies scholars more broadly have discussed (TallBear 2013). Witgen (2011) and Sleeper-Smith (2005) discuss how people took on new names during their lives, sometimes the identities of respected persons who had walked on.

The slice of Anishinaabe intellectual traditions that I have focused on here involves three concepts that, in the next section, I will discuss as interconnected: interdependence, systems of responsibilities, and migration. These concepts encompass a wide range of ways in which Anishinaabe live and theorize about environmental stewardship, ethics, gender, leadership, and cosmology. At least one possible nexus of these concepts, from my perspective here, is a theory of value of social resilience and self-determination that I will call “collective continuance.”

## Collective Continuance and Ecology

I see the concepts of interdependence, systems of responsibilities, and migration as converging on an important value for any society: collective continuance. Collective continuance refers to a society’s capacity to self-determine how to adapt to change in ways that avoid reasonably preventable harms. Adaptive capacity is similar to what is often meant by the concept of social resilience. In the Anishinaabe intellectual traditions I just discussed, which predate “Western” concepts of social resilience, seasonal round governance systems are highly flexible webs of relationships. The relationships are based on particular responsibilities that each party in a relationship has. Building from my more simple definition offered earlier, responsibilities refer to the reciprocal (though not necessarily equal) attitudes and patterns of behavior that are expected by and of various parties by virtue of the different roles that each may be understood to play in a relationship. Reciprocity is understood through the gift-giving and -receiving relationship in which each party has a special contribution to make. But to become a party in a relationship, one must be transformed into a relative with reciprocal obligations, and transformation often occurs through ceremonies and other formal activities. Anishinaabe kinship relationships connected, via reciprocal responsibilities, humans with other humans, humans with nonhumans, whether spirits, plants, animals, or elements (e.g., water) and humans with particular places. The ways in which responsibilities are organized into interdependent systems facilitate the adaptive capacity of collective continuance, which I will discuss in more detail starting with the idea that responsibilities are not static or unchanging.

Consider the ancient Anishinaabe reciprocal responsibility with water and wild rice, for example. Some of my work is devoted to wild rice advocacy and conservation in the Great Lakes region, and I will be providing some general history and information here. The responsibility emerged during a particular point in the Anishinaabe migration story in which the travelers were told to stop when they arrived at the land where food grows on water. At this stopping point, they had to develop relationships with water and rice as relatives and establish reciprocal (gift giving/receiving) responsibilities that would support the lives of all relatives, from the nutritional and ceremonial uses humans gain from rice to the human stewardship and protection of rice habitats that rice gains from humans. Anishinaabe peoples today, in different ways, seek to maintain relationships of responsibility with wild rice and water for the sake of their identities, nutrition and environmental health, among other purposes. This is a persisting responsibility, or one that societies seek to continue into the future.

Emerging responsibilities are those that societies create through innovation to respond to new issues. For example, many Anishinaabe governments today hire scientific staff (often tribal members) who play key roles in monitoring and protecting wild rice and water. I know many tribes who seek to ensure that scientific work is performed responsibly, which means that staff are guided by elders, involve all generations of the community in their research and education, participate in tribal life, and ensure through events and other

opportunities that they are held accountable by the community. I often interpret such situations as transformations of tribal scientists into kin who have responsibilities to wild rice, water, and the community. Emerging responsibilities, like with wild rice so long ago, may become persisting responsibilities one day.

Philosophically, a key question is what makes systems of responsibilities capable of high degrees of adjustability through the interplay of maintaining critical persisting responsibilities and creating emerging responsibilities that best respond to change. I will claim here that one possible reason has to do with the ways in which responsibilities are organized to foster interdependence. Consider, again, responsibilities pertaining to wild rice and water. Particular people are vested by their communities with leadership to take care of rice and water. Often, women and members of particular clans are vested with this responsibility (Andow et al. 2009; Child 2012). Rice-harvesting camps, which involve interactions with water, are opportunities for different families and people to reaffirm bonds and share knowledge.

Various communities and families have special relationships to particular ricing areas and have developed diplomatic protocols for coordinating but not having to divulge secrets with other groups. Historically, from what I have heard, Anishinaabe people had protocols with other groups, such as Dakotas, who riced too, having their own sacred traditions. Wild rice and water, both their nutritional and spiritual place in Anishinaabe societies, are so integral to identity that some people, such as Frances Van Zile, say they would cease being Anishinaabe in their absence (quoted in GLIFWC 1995, regarding wild rice).

In the example of wild rice, the significance I want to highlight involves not just what types of relationships are or were prevalent. The types of relationships being described are reciprocal responsibilities (as opposed to rights, duties, contracts etc.). I want to focus on the qualities of the responsibilities that have developed over time, which foster interdependence. These qualities, including consent, diplomacy, trust, and redundancy, facilitate interdependence in ways that make it possible for the types of relationships to actually have the capacities to achieve social outcomes, including freedom, sustainability, cultural integrity, economic vitality, and so on. Trust refers to a quality of relationships among people in the community in which each party or relative, human and nonhuman, takes to heart the best interests of the other party or relative. People trust one another when they feel confident and at ease that the trustor takes the trustee's best interest to heart. Women's leadership involved thorough vetting processes that ensured that those responsible for rice were qualified and ceremonies served to reaffirm people's motivation publically to hold certain responsibilities. These processes and ceremonies also re-affirmed another quality, consent, which refers to people's capacity to approve or veto the actions of others that may affect them. That people passed vetting processes or engaged in ceremonies affirmed that people consented to their exercising certain responsibilities.

Redundancy is a quality that refers to states of affairs of having multiple options for adaptation when changes occur and for being able to guarantee sufficient opportunities for education and mentorship for community members. For example, in the case of wild rice harvesting, a society with high redundancy is one that can harvest from multiple ricing lakes in the event that some lakes stop producing rice for some period of time, whether naturally or through destruction or occupation by settlers. Redundancy also includes the distribution of wild ricing expertise across both numerous delegated leaders and all members of society who have to have sufficient skills and caretaking expertise to conserve wild rice. So, if a major delegated leader in wild rice walks on, there are many more people who can maintain the tradition. Redundancy is similar to buffering in resilience or systems theory.

Diplomacy is the quality of being able to engage in productive relationships with others without being forced to disclose matters that are sacred or that make one unacceptably vulnerable (and hence exploitable, especially by a more powerful party). Diplomacy occurs

internally within communities, such as allowing members of certain genders to meet independently to discuss key matters. Externally, there are also political protocols for sharing rice regions without violating each community's (often secretive) sacred and economic relationships to rice. While diplomacy can be understood, in one respect, as the withholding of knowledge and information, it is, more importantly, true that relationships in which secrets are respected are ones in which the parties or kin to those relationships are more comfortable working together and expanding their work together. If each kin is confident in the safety of whatever it is that they do not want to disclose, then they can move forward together knowing that their consent to share what they are comfortable with is protected.

For Anishinaabe and many other Indigenous peoples, I would argue that people would say too that these qualities emanate, in different ways, from the nonhumans—though that discussion is for another piece of writing, given the complexity around what it means for nonhuman beings or systems to be in consensual, trustworthy, diplomatic, and redundant relationships with humans. I would argue that these qualities of relationships can see societies through some of the toughest of times, which means they support self-determined adaptive capacity that avoids reasonably preventable harms—that is, they support collective continuance.

High levels of trust in leadership, traditions of consent, and access to large areas of land facilitate adaptation to major environmental shocks. Within a society, these qualities, even in the face of less disruptive changes, create more freedom and a sense of attachment. One's having a sense of trust and consent gives someone the confidence to express how and who they are. Anishinaabe intellectual traditions can suggest aspirations toward very meritocratic societies, in which someone's having a leadership role has to do with how they have been vetted and proved themselves in action, not simply something tied alone to privileges associated with gender or heredity. A society with a high degree of what I call collective continuance is one that has many qualities of relationships like the ones I described. For me, these qualities are key elements of interdependence, yet it is an interdependence capable of transformation and change through facilitating persisting and emerging responsibilities. When these qualities decline in number and in practice, then society has less social resilience.

Patriarchy, a foundational aspect of US settler colonialism, is a system of relationships with few qualities of relationships. Patriarchal relationships involve low levels of society-wide trust and consent. They also involve low levels of diplomacy within society given their disrespect for privacy and consensual intimacy. Redundancy is also lowered if only men are responsible for knowing certain environments, which lessens the knowledge base and transferability of knowledge and skills within a society. It also reduces meritocracy as talented persons of diverse and nonbinary genders are denied opportunities to excel at their talents and gifts.

Forced relocation, another aspect of settler colonialism, whether through imposing reservations on Indigenous peoples or complete removal, threaten redundancy. Reservations, for example, furnish less access to places for harvesting and ceremonial practices. Boarding schools and policies, such as relocation, that divide and separate Indigenous communities destroy the basis for maintaining languages and cultural practices that are also tied to maintaining other qualities such as trust and consent. One reason I often hear for why many Potawatomi people want to restore intergenerational fluency in our language is that our own linguistic expressions have elements that are more trustworthy as means of communication than English.

The qualities of relationships and responsibilities that make up collective continuance are the bonds that create interdependency between human institutions (e.g., lodges, ceremonies, offices) and ecosystems (e.g., habitats, watersheds). In this way, I am describing

an ecology, that is, an ecological system, of interacting humans, nonhuman beings (animals, plants, etc.) and entities (spiritual, inanimate, etc.), and landscapes (climate regions, boreal zones, etc.) that are conceptualized and operate purposefully to facilitate a collective's (such as an Indigenous people) adaptation to changes. Ecologies here are understood in terms of their makeup of qualities of relationships. As in most understandings of ecology and agroecology today, the term "ecology" is not denoting systems or capacities always seeking to bounce back toward some equilibrium. Rather, it is much more about "trans-motion," constant migration and the interplay between persisting and emerging relationships (Whyte 2015).

At the same time, newer challenges that fall outside that range, including global environmental change and the intervention of other societies (e.g., settler colonialism), may interfere with, perturb, or degrade the ability of certain qualities to provide valued aspects of a collective's quality of life, such as cultural integrity, freedom, food security, public health, and so on. While the term "ecologies" may strike some as strange, I use it to suggest not only ecosystems but also the calculated stewardship of them (hence the -logy). One way to understand the adaptive capacity of ecologies is through how well certain ecologies facilitate the interplay between persisting and emerging responsibilities (Whyte 2015).

Collective continuance then can be described as ecology. As a value, collective continuance can be used to understand many complexities today, such as a people's capacity to respond to environmental threats by engendering a sense of responsibility in its members that is intrinsically valuable to their identity. While I tend to write about collective continuance in terms of *a* society's collective continuance, the fact is that few people belong to *a single* society. But collective continuance is actually not based on a strict notion of belongingness. If I zoom to the level of a particular person's identity, they may belong, in different ways, to multiple societies, similar to the migratory concepts I described earlier. Each society has its own relationships of reciprocal responsibilities or lack thereof. Someone's capacity for self-determination and well-being is in part related to whether they are in relationships with qualities such as those I have enumerated. These qualities of relationships, whether particular to a society or overlapping across societies, have everything to do with that persons' capacity to adapt to changes in ways that maintain as much well-being and self-determination as is feasible depending on the times they live in and forces they are encountering.

## The Ecology of Settler Colonial Domination

The concept of collective continuance can explain some of the reasons why settler colonial domination is ecological violence and environmental injustice. I am now using "ecology" in the sense defined earlier in relation to collective continuance. Recently, settler colonialism has been articulated as a theory of domination and a field that is associated with non-Indigenous scholars (Veracini 2010). However, as my earlier quote of Awbanawben shows, the very same ideas in many respects were in circulation in Indigenous communities in the nineteenth century and probably before. Awbanawben, for example, challenged settlers' deceitful self-effacement of their own causation of the potential "perishing" of Potawatomi people, their "[trampling] of the soil" and their undermining of peoples' rights and relationships to land, which underscores some of the key aspects of settler colonial domination that I will describe in this section. Moreover, a brief review of work in Indigenous intellectual traditions may reveal insights and discussions about settler colonialism from the last several hundred years (Lefevre 2015; Martinez 2011; Warrior 2017). Contemporary academics and writers, including many Indigenous feminists, have long named settler colonialism or used

other terms referring to the same type of domination (Calhoun et al. 2007; Lefevre 2015; Maracle 2015; Speed 2017).

In my understanding, settler colonialism refers to complex social processes in which at least one society seeks to move permanently onto the terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial places lived in by one or more other societies who already derive economic vitality, cultural flourishing, and political self-determination from the relationships they have established with the plants, animals, physical entities, and ecosystems of those places. When the process of settler colonialism takes place or has already occurred in some region, the societies who are moving in or have already done so can be called “settlers,” and the societies already living there at the beginning of settlement, “Indigenous peoples.”

The settlers’ aspirations are to transform Indigenous homelands into settler homelands. Settlers create moralizing narratives about why it is (or was) necessary to destroy other peoples (e.g., military or cultural inferiority), or they take great pains to forget or cover up the inevitable militancy and brutality of settlement. Settlement is deeply harmful and risk-laden for Indigenous peoples because settlers are literally seeking to erase Indigenous economies, cultures, and political organizations for the sake of establishing their own. Settler colonialism, then, is a type of injustice driven by settlers’ desire, conscious and tacit, to erase Indigenous peoples and to erase or legitimate settlers’ causation of such domination.

Looking closely at processes of settler colonial domination, there is an important ecological dimension—again, where I am using ecology in the sense discussed in the previous section. By seeking to establish their own homelands, settler populations are working to create their own ecologies out of the ecologies of Indigenous peoples, which often requires that settlers bring in additional materials and living beings (e.g., plants, animals) from abroad. Consider US settler colonial domination of Anishinaabewaki. The US rerouted the hydrology to facilitate its own forms of transportation and water use. The US mined, deforested, and industrialized the Great Lakes region. US settlers killed off or decimated many species and intentionally and unintentionally introduced new ones. The draining of wetlands, development of commercial agriculture and recreational areas, and building of massive urban areas and military, chemical, oil, and gas industries transformed the ecologies of Anishinaabewaki into a US settler ecology, including states such as Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Minnesota.

The US strategically sought to undermine the qualities of relationships that served Anishinaabe collective continuance. Historical accounts show that the US used patriarchy and racism to undermine Indigenous leadership. The US contained seasonal rounds through the creation of reservations, liquidation of land into private property, and illegalization of Indigenous ceremonial practices. In policies such as allotment of private property, Anishinaabe and other Indigenous peoples often sought to manage those properties cooperatively, which the US also worked to prevent.

The US did not regulate forms of pollution, terraforming and hydraulic engineering that specifically alter the ecological dynamics that Indigenous collective continuance is based on. The US pressured Indigenous governments to reengineer themselves as yearlong, voter-elected councils designed to facilitate extractive industries in Indigenous territories. Boarding schools worked to deliberately erase Indigenous languages and cultures, installing heteropatriarchal values and privileging the nuclear family that would ultimately replace, for many attendees, the more open and fluid gender and kinship systems of their heritages and intellectual traditions.

Each of these US settler strategies harms qualities of relationships that are crucial for Anishinaabe and Indigenous collective continuance. Patriarchy and uncontrolled extractive industries undermine consent. Knowledge destruction and corporate tribal government undermine the trustworthiness of knowers in their communities and the trustworthiness



of leadership. Indigenous people then had to rely on scientists to protect their safety, but, in numerous cases, scientists did not report what they knew (e.g., the risks of exposure to industrially caused toxicity in fish). Containment and relocation destroy redundancy. At the same time, the actual environmental changes themselves hasten the undermining of qualities of relationships—such as loss of knowledge and Indigenous legal/judicial systems coupled with the loss of landscapes from which those knowledge and legal/judicial systems came from. The harms just described impact negatively Indigenous peoples' persisting responsibilities and threaten Indigenous peoples' capacities to engender emerging responsibilities.

At the same time, the purpose of settler colonialism is for the US to establish its ecology and, hence, social resilience, in Indigenous ecologies or homelands. So the US too, to refer to a complex nation more simply, involves the establishment of its own ecology, at the expense of Indigenous ecologies. There is a deliberate attempt *not* to share ecologies. The US has had little to no interest in what Eve Tuck, Hannah Sultan, and Alison Gueess (2014) have referred to as issues regarding “selfsame land,” what Simpson (2008) refers to in her interpretation of the Dish with One Spoon treaty, what Witgen (2011) refers to as Anishinaabewaki (as a place of complex/diverse kinship).

As an environmental injustice, settler colonialism is a social process by which at least one society seeks to establish its own collective continuance at the expense of the collective continuance of one or more other societies—just one of its injustice-making features. Historically and today, there are many threats to collective continuance that are accidental and unavoidable, but settler colonial domination is not one of these threats. For Indigenous peoples under settler colonialism, wrongful domination is locatable at the intersection of settler intent to undermine Indigenous collective continuance (and hence Indigenous ecologies) through disrupting the qualities of relationships that are constitutive of collective continuance and that facilitate social resilience or adaptive capacity. Settler colonial domination undermines social resilience.

US settler colonialism, in terms of collective continuance, is a complex process because settlement inscribes the settler ecology. First, US settler ecology involves philosophies and practices associated with Europe, emerging US settler culture, and other parts of the world that are carved into Indigenous ecologies. D. Ezra Miller refers to what I am calling a carving process as the development and maintenance of “settlerscapes” (Miller 2016). Second, US settler ecologies involve erasures of the qualities of relationships that matter to Indigenous peoples. While US settler ecologies have attempted to establish qualities of relationships themselves, they have had trouble promoting qualities of consent and trust. While they did establish redundancy in a certain sense by taking over so much land and so many “resources,” without other qualities of relationships, they have created a notoriously unsustainable society.

Both the byproducts and pollution of their economies are stored in sinks, such as the climate system or bodies of water, that are being destabilized or degraded, and resources such as coal or oil are going to run out. So to argue that one society pursues its collective continuance at the expense of another society is not to say that the former's collective continuance is somehow superior. The former's collective continuance could be highly anti-adaptive. In fact, what adaptive capacity the US does have is often tethered to wealth generated from exploitation, un-checked “growth,” and extraction of nonrenewable resources.

As I see in the US, there is not a particularly high degree of qualities of relationships within the settler colonial system. The US actually tries to establish troubling “persisting” relationships with the environment by creating fictional imaginaries of its political and cultural legitimacy in North America, from the doctrine of discovery to the ideologies of “wilderness”. At one point, each of these imaginaries was an “emerging” relationship, which

people in the US took pains to transform into one they take to be “persisting.” It should be noted that the US has rarely sought to create emerging and persisting relationships that are responsibilities, favoring instead the privileging of types of relationships such as rights, contracts (e.g. relating to private property), and consumer/commodity associations. So, while I can use collective continuance as a concept to describe the US, I cannot argue that the US has a high degree of collective continuance.

Third, because of this unsustainability and lack of flexibility of a particular formation of settler colonialism (I can imagine ones that are not), there is the creation of environmental injustices. The environmental problems created through unsustainable settler colonialism burden underprivileged populations. Environmental injustices are committed in at least two senses. In the US, Indigenous peoples, peoples of color, and many more populations who experience oppression live in environments where they experience more pollution and less capacity to have meaningful connections with the nonhuman world (Mohai et al. 2009). Then, perhaps because of a psychological issue that I do not have the space to discuss more here, settler populations suppress the unsustainability of their society, avoiding discussions of the industrial bases of their society. So many members of settler populations are not actually aware of the sources of their energy or consumer lifestyles. Because the spaces where energy is sourced are often populated with Indigenous peoples, people of color, and other groups who experience oppression, settler populations sometimes even deny that environmental injustice is an important issue.

A broad range of Indigenous testimonies and intellectual traditions describe settler colonialism as threatening social resilience. Awbanawben certainly saw the US as seeking to erase its own causation in the degradation of ecological relationships, and then forcing Indigenous peoples to accommodate the US by relocating. In the area of human-caused climate change, Simpson discusses how “Indigenous peoples have always been able to adapt, and we’ve had a resilience. But the speed of this—our stories and our culture and our oral tradition doesn’t keep up, can’t keep up. . . . Colonial thought brought us climate change (quoted in Klein 2013). In another case involving threats from extractive industries to Indigenous peoples in the Yukon territory, Norma Kassi, speaking of her Gwich’in community, says: “We cannot, however, simply change our diet. If we were to change suddenly and start eating store-bought foods more, then disease would increase and our rate of death would be higher, because it would be too rapid a change, too much of a shock to our systems” (1996: 80). Grace Dillon describes Indigenous science-fiction imaginations, often ones involving massive ecological degradation, as “survival stories” that are about “persistence, adaptation, and flourishing in the future” (2016: 9). I read these writers, scholars, and activists as saying that settler colonialism deeply threatens the interplay of persisting and emerging responsibilities that is crucial for social resilience.

Settler colonial domination can be understood as an undermining of Indigenous adaptive capacity or social resilience. A key ecological dimension of such domination is how settler colonial strategies threaten qualities of relationships that constitute Indigenous ecologies or collective continuance. Settler colonial domination does so deliberately and at a pace that is too rapid for any society to be able to reasonably adjust to without compromising its self-determination and without avoiding harms that society would historically not have been susceptible to. What I have just described represents one dimension of how settler colonialism is violence that disrupts human relationships to the environment.

## Environmental Violence and Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism, as an ecological form of domination, is environmental violence. In the first paragraph of this article, I feature the voices of people who understand the disruption of relationships between humans and the environment as violent. Interpreting the disruptions ecologically, it is possible to identify some violent patterns of environmental injustice that arise from settler colonialism. While I do not think there is some exhaustive list of patterns of injustice, I do want to discuss at least two and give them labels for the sake of this essay. The first is “vicious sedimentation,” which is the pattern of how environmental changes compound over time to reinforce and strengthen settler ignorance against Indigenous peoples. The second is “insidious loops,” which is the pattern of how historic settler industries that violated Indigenous peoples when they began are also implicated many years later in further environmental violence, such as climate injustice.

Vicious sedimentation refers to how constant ascriptions of settler ecologies onto Indigenous ecologies fortify settler ignorance against Indigenous peoples over time. In historic accounts of fur traders, clergy, and settlers, they certainly attempted to enclose regions such as Anishinaabewaki into settler concepts of nationhood, savage places, and so on. But in reading those accounts, the colonists nonetheless traveled through these regions and recognized the different Indigenous ecologies operative within those places. Witgen (2011), Sleeper-Smith (2001), Michael McDonnell (2015), and White (1991) provide accounts of European and US attempts to abide by Anishinaabe kinship-based forms of diplomacy. Yet, fast-forward more than two centuries later. People who participate in settler colonial domination are perhaps more likely to have their discriminatory beliefs about Indigenous peoples confirmed by the prevalence of settler ecologies that have forcibly overlaid Indigenous ecologies substantially and dramatically.

The Midwestern US, for example, appears to settlers, depending on where, as endless farming and commercial agriculture, recreational lakeshore, unoccupied parks, vast urban centers, wilderness space, golf courses, quaint towns, military installations, and so on. When settlers even walk onto an Indigenous jurisdiction or nearby a sacred site, there is a good chance that they experience no awareness of any difference from their own lives. From the soils and hydrology to the flora and fauna, all they can see are settler ways of life. Even references to “Native American inhabitation” in parks and tourist sites are often written by non-Indigenous persons and do not reflect the lives of the descendants of those “inhabitants” today. The lack of visibility of wild rice beds and the Indigenous communities who monitor and protect them, when settlers drive along highways, go on hikes, mine, or grow foods, among other activities, further solidifies the presumption that Indigenous peoples are absent. Urban gentrification in Midwestern cities erases any traces of Indigenous origins of the area. Gentrification processes often commodify highly selective memories and legacies of other groups, often people of color, who lived there before the most recent gentrification process.

Mishuana Goeman develops the concept of “settler grammars of place” to describe “repetitive practices of everyday life that give settler place meaning and structure” (2014: 237). Yet sedimentation and repetitiveness do not mean that there are no Indigenous ecologies living and operative in the world. Goeman’s work is importantly about “constant mobility” (239) too. Goeman shows how Indigenous peoples develop and renew qualities of relationships among humans and nonhumans in environments that settlers would think bear no traces of Indigenous ecologies—such as the city of Los Angeles:

Often, it was necessary for women to practice gendered relations outside the cultural forms learned from their mothers, aunties and grandmothers. These practices of relating to each other were not ‘outdated’ in the city, but instead the elements of these prac-

tics that persisted were and continue to be vital to Native navigations in urban centers. In many ways, the lack of the dominant culture's understanding of Native peoples' capacity to reach out to others beyond their specific Tribal Nation was a major flaw in the goals of Relocation policy. In fact, the propensity for sharing where one is from and learning to live with each other comes from thousands of years of experience living on this continent together—it is as instinctive as breathing. (2009: 175)

At one level, then, sedimentation renders settler populations unwilling to accept Indigenous peoples as adaptive people with long *and* continuing histories in North America. In the strands of Anishinaabe intellectual traditions I drew from earlier, many of the scholars have pointed to settlers' unwillingness to recognize Anishinaabe migration, seeking to fix particular groups of people into nations or other formations that have immovable territorial boundaries. Reading Goeman suggests a different approach. For example, if migration, as social resilience, flourishes through qualities of relationships, then the qualities of relationships are constantly manifesting in different ways, through persisting and emerging responsibilities. Qualities like trust, consent, diplomacy, and redundancy can guide efforts to achieve safety, justice, and wellness under hostile conditions.

The sedimentation is vicious because it significantly damages settlers' inclinations for consensual decision-making with Indigenous peoples. Consider how strictly bounded reservations erase the larger territories that are significant to Indigenous peoples. In the Dakota Access Pipeline issue, pipeline proponents claim that "The Dakota Access Pipeline does not cross land owned by the Standing Rock Sioux" (DAPL Facts 2018). North Dakota State congressperson Kevin Cramer (2016) claims that "The pipeline does not cross any land owned by the Standing Rock Sioux. The land under discussion belongs to private owners and the federal government. To suggest that the Standing Rock tribe has the legal ability to block the pipeline is to turn America's property rights upside down." These claims, of course, efface the long histories of non-consensual land dispossession along the pipeline's route and the efforts of the Oceti Sakowin over many years to maintain collective self-determination against multiple threats generated by the US. Sedimented dispossession then makes it seem to settlers that the pipeline today does not require Indigenous consent since it is off reservation.

At the same time, vicious sedimentation explains why certain allies are unable to advocate effectively for Indigenous peoples. Some allies of the tribe also mistakenly reduced the issue to that of the immediate threat to water and cultural heritage of a single pipeline. So these allies' advocacy does not engage the longer and larger issues pertaining to mechanisms of colonial power that engendered and maintain land dispossession and the denial of self-determination. Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (2005) and Tuck and Yang (2012) have written about innocence, in which privileged persons feel that their daily actions and aspirations for justice are not implicated in settler colonial domination. Hence, these persons get to feel good about advocating for Indigenous peoples without having to take on the hard work of doing anything that will change the underlying land-based structures of domination that secure Indigenous disempowerment. These underlying land-based structures are what made it possible in the first place for the Dakota Access Pipeline—including the process of its construction—to even be something that some people would envision as good.

Innocence also pertains to allies who are disappointed when they find out that Indigenous peoples in various cases do not "live off the land" as their ancestors may have done or are Christian. In the absence of any capacity to recognize living Indigenous ecologies or the realities of settler-caused ecological destruction, they work with whatever information they have gleaned from the biased sources they have access to. These sources do not discuss Indigenous peoples beyond rather static portrayals that are demographically unfounded. In

psychology, this is often called the representative heuristic (Kahneman et al. 1982). Vicious sedimentation drives the process of limiting representativeness and creates conditions for ignorant people to become frustrated when it turns out that an Indigenous community is struggling for aspirations that are complex and dynamic and that seek to confront the realities of ecological destruction.

Insidious loops refer to the complex feedback from ecological systems that is particularly harmful for Indigenous peoples. Consider climate justice. The destabilization of the climate system, or human-caused (anthropogenic) climate change, produces ecological conditions that disrupt human societies, through impacts such as rising sea levels, more severe droughts, warming freshwater, and faster melting glaciers. It is certainly true that “all humanity” faces climate risk. Yet a scan of scientific reports from the US Global Change Research Program and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows that Indigenous peoples are among the populations whose well-being is threatened the most.

One of the most notable cases involves those Indigenous peoples who are among the first groups to make decisions about whether and how to relocate because of sea level rise in the Arctic, the Gulf of Mexico, and other places. Moreover, disproportionate Indigenous suffering is produced by changing environmental conditions—and once again—the machinations of US settler colonialism. Many relocating tribes, for example, are vulnerable precisely because they were forced to live permanently on tiny areas of land with limited adaptive options. The shrinking of their lands occurred before today’s climate change ordeal through US military expansion, settler oil and gas companies pipelines, public water control infrastructure and flood control measures, and the development of industrial agriculture, among other factors (Maldonado et al. 2013). The climatic vulnerability of these tribes today is the looping effect of US strategies to undermine Indigenous qualities of responsibilities through land dispossession/shrinkage and the pollution/emissions of many industrial activities whose operations are/were secured through colonial land dispossession/shrinkage.

The looping effects of undermining qualities of responsibilities, such as consent or trust, are evident in how climate change also opens up more Indigenous territories, such as in the Arctic, to pressure from colonial exploitation, as thawing snow and ice create access to resources, such as oil and other hydrocarbons, that were previously hard to access. This climate-related development, as well as booms in extractive industries due to other causes, increases detrimental effects already experienced with past extractive industries. The workers camps, or “man camps,” created to support drilling and mining, intensify sexual and gender violence through increases in the trafficking of Indigenous women and children (Deer and Nagle 2017; Sweet 2014a, 2014b). Sarah Deer and Mary Kathryn Nagle describe how “the trafficking of Native women and children is not a new phenomenon. . . . Sexual exploitation of Native women and children, dating back to the times of the Spanish Conquistadors, often times accompanies the colonial conquest of tribal lands.” Yet “the Bakken oil boom has created a renewed sense of urgency in areas that have recently experienced a rapid increase in oil extraction” (2017: 36). Victoria Sweet (2014b) describes how workers in extractive industries often have “no community accountability,” which presents major problems for Indigenous women and children when workers’ presence increases in a region. Climate change, then, is part of a looping process that, in conjunction with ongoing colonialism, engenders violence and environmental injustice against Indigenous peoples.

Vicious sedimentation and insidious loops are patterns of environmental injustice that are characteristic of settler colonial domination when considering the ecological dimension of settlement. At the surface level, environmental violence manifests as the imposition of

environmental destruction and pollution. At another level, it is possible to look at environmental violence as undermining the qualities of relationships that are constitutive of any society's social resilience or collective continuance. Hence, settler sedimentation (i.e., "settlerscapes," "settler grammars of place"), settler "innocence," and gender and sexual violence are ecological issues. But I do not mean so in the sense that they are subsumable under some conception of the environment. Nor do I mean that the examples I gave of vicious sedimentation and insidious loops are ecological simply because they somehow implicate the environment. Rather, I am relating violence to ecology to highlight the ways they are very much related to systems concepts such as resilience, adaptive capacity, and sustainability—what I have described through centering concepts of collective continuance and Indigenous ecologies. For, using these ecological concepts, problems like the Dakota Access Pipeline and the trafficking of Indigenous women and children are violations of trust, consent, diplomacy, and redundancy (redundancy, given these problems' connections to land dispossession).

In this article, the approach to settler colonial domination has implications for current projects of reconciliation and the establishment of justice for Indigenous peoples. Honoring qualities of relationships requires, as a matter of Indigenous collective continuance, that settler nations relate to Indigenous peoples in ways that secure needed lands (for the sake of protecting redundancy) and changing policies that undermine trust, diplomacy, and consent. While I do not have the space for elaborating actions that establish justice, I am nonetheless noting here what the implications of this theoretical outline are for unambiguous requirements on settler states for establishing justice.

At the same time, theories of collective continuance have moral implications for Indigenous communities themselves. For myself and many I know, we live among a host of projects to revitalize Indigenous sovereignty and traditions. Yet, within our communities, many of us have experienced oppressive forms of self-determination and revitalization, where our own people seek to bring back types of relationships without attending to qualities of relationships. Examples include aspirations to Indigenous sovereignty that do not attempt to restore genuine consent or trust and practices of cultural revitalization that are dominated by patriarchy. Examples like these ignore the moral significance of qualities of relationships in the operation of emerging responsibilities (e.g., US-recognized forms of sovereignty) or persisting responsibilities (e.g., language maintenance). Collective continuance, as a value, can be used to assess both settler and Indigenous attempts to foster conditions of justice. The outline of the theory offered here seeks then to be compatible with important recent work in Indigenous studies that supports much stronger connections between Indigenous peoples and ecosystems than are found in settler laws and policies and settler approaches to reconciliation.

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## CHAPTER 9

# Contradictions of Solidarity

## Whiteness, Settler Coloniality, and the Mainstream Environmental Movement

*Joe Curnow and Anjali Helferty*

In late 2016, thousands of water protectors, Indigenous and settler, celebrated a hard-won victory. They had temporarily stopped pipeline construction at the Oceti Sakowin Camp, near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation. Months before, Indigenous youth put their bodies on the line to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Over time, the encampments grew to include as many as 12,000 people, including Indigenous people from nearly 300 nations, environmental justice activists, mainstream environmentalists, military veterans, and others committed to stopping the DAPL from being built (CBC News 2016)<sup>1</sup>. The news of their victory was a rare moment for celebration, not just because the easement to enable pipeline construction through Indigenous land and under Lake Oahe had not been granted (DA 2016), but also for the relationships that were built across different communities over the course of this fight. Leaders of the Standing Rock Sioux had invited settler and Indigenous people from around the world to stand with them to protect water, land, and future generations. Thousands of well-intentioned people arrived at Standing Rock to, very much imperfectly, put their solidarity theory into action.

In the past several years, there has been a rise in this type of alliance. Multiracial coalitions have been built that take up Indigenous sovereignty as a central piece of climate change work targeting pipeline infrastructure. In November 2015, we saw former US President Barack Obama's administration reject the Keystone XL pipeline after large-scale mobilizations (CP 2014). From the moment Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau approved

the Kinder Morgan pipeline in November 2016 (Tasker 2016), Indigenous peoples and environmentalists have promised to block pipeline construction through legal strategies (TWNSTL 2016) and legislation (Harrison 2016), as well as mobilizations, encampments, and other direct action strategies (Hudema 2016). These partnerships are significant in that they bring together historically distinct social movements: the mainstream environmental movement, the environmental justice movement, and Indigenous resurgence and sovereignty movements. They represent the potential for a shift toward reconciliation and solidarity,<sup>2</sup> rooted in critiques of settler colonialism and racialization.

The anti-pipeline alliances and other land-based fights have forced mainstream environmentalists to confront the racialized and colonial implications of environmental work. For some, though certainly not all, it has decentered white, settler approaches to environmentalism. Yet, even as these campaigns have grown and often thrived, the relationships are difficult to navigate as different ideas about the environment and its relationship to settler colonialism and racialization surface. Different ways of knowing and being, different relationships to land and community, different exposure to risk, and long histories of mistrust have created a difficult environment for reconciliation work. Indeed, Indigenous people reflecting on their experiences at Standing Rock noted the challenges of working with settlers. White settlers who were unfamiliar with the histories of settler colonialism and racialization and were unprepared to recognize and check their own Eurowestern ways of knowing and being, or often inadvertently perform white saviorism, proved to be particularly problematic (Cram 2016; Gray 2016; O'Connor 2016).

We are interested in how settlers do solidarity in these spaces. In this article, we start by situating environmental activism as a white, settler space. We then recognize the racialized history of the environmental movement in the United States and Canada, pulling together histories of colonial and racializing processes that have defined the mainstream movement as a default white space. We look to theories of solidarity to examine the ways in which solidarity resists and reproduces processes of racialization, colonialism, and whiteness, exploring the contradictions of solidarity work. In our conclusion, we argue that the contradictions of racialized and colonial solidarity do not preclude settler attempts to do solidarity work. We encourage settlers and white people to deeply engage the contradictions of solidarity while continually working to understand and challenge racialization and settler coloniality within the environmental movement.

### **Whiteness and Settlerhood in Environmentalism**

Mainstream environmentalism has historically been a white, settler space. The term settler “denaturalizes and politicizes the presence of non-Indigenous people on Indigenous lands, but also can disrupt the comfort of non-Indigenous people by bringing ongoing colonial power relations into their consciousness” (Flowers 2015: 33). The term recognizes different people’s responsibilities and culpability/complicity in the colonial project. There is debate over the use of “settler,” as it can collapse the different histories and responsibilities that differently positioned non-Indigenous people carry (Byrd 2011; Lawrence and Dua 2005; Sharma and Wright 2008). We agree that specificity is critical to communicating about the different responsibilities and differential access to power and privilege settlers have. At the same time, like Sherene Razack (2015) and Jaskiran Dhillon (2015), we stress that any move to account for that complexity must not eclipse “what it means to live in a settler colonial state, [where] people of color and white settlers alike must confront our collective illegitimacy and determine how to live without participating in and sustaining the disappearance of Indigenous peoples” (Razack 2015: 27).

In this article, we theorize the complexity of how settler environmentalists might navigate racialization and colonialism in order to do solidarity, especially in a movement that has been so thoroughly marked by (and critiqued for) whiteness. Mainstream environmentalism, which in itself encompasses work ranging from raising awareness about ocean acidification to participating in a tree sit, includes settlers of color, and they/we are implicated in the settler colonial project as well, though differently. However, the existence of diversity does not preclude the domination of white culture (Ward 2008). Our goal in using particular terminology is to stress the role that whiteness plays in the mainstream environmental movement, understood through the logics of racialization and settler colonialism simultaneously. We are not trying to erase or collapse social relations or experiences. Throughout this article, we are thinking about the ways in which racialization is enacted and resisted—and enacted through resistance—within a white, colonial movement.

So how do settlers do environmentalism differently? How might we engage in decolonial, antiracist solidarity? Coming out of our long history of a racist and racializing movement and immersed in dominant social relations, how might mainstream environmentalists rethink our movement and our participation in solidarity? We arrive at this work as activists who worked in the environmental and global justice movements for more than a decade before coming to academic research. As scholars, we have been surprised at the lack of literature that acknowledges the whiteness of the mainstream environmental movement head-on, since this is a widely understood critique in the movement. As settler activists,<sup>3</sup> our experience in movements drives our questions, as we seek to understand how activists, and environmentalists in particular, can learn to do solidarity in the context of racialized, colonial social relations. We take up this work not to be unsympathetically critical but to contribute to greater awareness of the ways in which solidarity frameworks can reinscribe racialized and colonial dynamics even as they seek to overcome them.

### Environmentalism as a White, Settler Movement

In this section, we give a brief overview of the history of the mainstream environmental movement in Canada and the United States. Rather than providing an in-depth history of the movement(s),<sup>4</sup> we focus on aspects that build environmentalism as colonial. We also provide greater detail on the mainstream environmental movements than on Indigenous or environmental justice movements, since we are problematizing racialization and settler colonialism in the mainstream movement.

Some historians locate the beginnings of Western environmentalism within the colonial project, explicitly tying it to dispossession and imperialism. Richard Grove (1996) links early versions of environmentalism explicitly to colonial expansion, starting from techno-administrative projects within the colonial apparatus of the East India Company, along with its Dutch, German, and French analogues. Scholars have also tied environmentalism to the theological-pastoralist reaction to the enlightenment (Worster 1994); revolutions in the organization of agricultural and extractive capital (Henderson 1998); vigorous and sometimes violent disputes over evolving and precarious land tenure relations (Mitman 1992); the invention of “recreation” and labor discipline in the nineteenth century; and the financialized booms, busts, and crises of westward rail expansion and settlement, abandonment, and resettlement of the hinterland of the Americas (Kohler 2013). These historians situate what we would understand as environmentalism within racialized colonial logics that use environmental discourses as a ruse for the expansion of capital, the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, and the exploitation of slaves and workers. This legacy is important to acknowledge, as it is often unwittingly woven through the ideologies of the environmental movement today.

While the implied virtuousness of conservation work in the present can make it seem unrelated to the violence of settler colonialism (Isaki 2013), these roots of modern mainstream environmentalism continue to impact the movement. From the beginning, conservation was tied to racist, sexist, and classist notions of wilderness protection in order to serve urban, bourgeois, white men's desire to construct themselves as rugged frontiersmen (Aguiar and Marten 2011; Collier 2015; Thorpe 2011). Claims of ownership over "wild" spaces were used to justify land theft based on the concept of terra nullius—that land was empty and available for the taking. The ideological underpinnings of terra nullius, which cannot be separated from the larger project of Indigenous dispossession and erasure (Dowie 2011), are foundational for conservation movements today that "protect" land through separation from people living with/on it. Tens of millions of people have been displaced by conservation efforts, and conservation organizations have failed to effectively respond to widespread criticism of their efforts on human rights grounds (Agrawal and Redford 2009). Even the official doctrine endures: it was only in 2014 that terra nullius was declared invalid in Canada (Fine 2014), and the 1964 US definition of wilderness from the Wilderness Act as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" persists to this day (Dowie 2006).

In recent decades, environmentalism has shifted and grown to include ecological approaches combating pesticide use; fighting toxic waste contamination; launching Earth Day; protecting endangered species, especially whales, and forests; fighting the seal hunt; and promoting recycling and ethical consumerism. Most recently, mainstream movement has taken up the discourse of climate justice (Curnow and Gross 2016; Goodman 2009) to respond to critiques that the climate movement has ignored the disproportionate impact of climate change on communities of color, especially postcolonial coastal states, that have been severely impacted for years (Adger et al. 2006; Our Power Campaign n.d.). In this context, many climate activists have looked to bridge environmental justice ideas with climate activism. However, in the context of mainstream environmentalism, this shift often remains largely semantic, with many of the policy solutions that are advocated for staying at the level of technocratic management of fossil fuel emissions.

### *Environmentalism and Indigenous Peoples*

Attention to relationship between peoples and lands is one of the coordinating worldviews common to many Indigenous peoples (Little Bear 2000). These worldviews are nation and place specific, and Indigenous scholars continue to document theories, teachings, and land/water-based practices (Atleo 2010; Basso 1996; Borrows 1997; Fermentez 2013; Hill 2017; LaDuke 1999; McGregor 2004; Simpson 2014; Todd 2014; Whetung 2016) in ways that center sovereignty and relationships to land and water but that are not typically considered within the environmentalist canon. Tsimshian and Nuu-chah-nulth scholar Clifford Atleo argues that environmentalist ideas of preservation and conservation are incongruous with an Indigenous worldview (2010), as the logic of needing to protect the land from humans/oneself is nonsensical within Indigenous teachings and practice. Rather than highlight the differences in worldview, however, we want to stress that these are not ideas about the land existing in parallel. Nishnaabe scholar Madeline Whetung argues that "colonial land relations have settled over top of Indigenous land-based relations, not beside them" (2016: 11). These are layered ideas, with colonial ideas about land, place, and environment emerging on top with the effect of disappearing Indigenous intelligences. Environmentalism contributes to Indigenous erasure and dispossession by perpetuating colonial relationships to land.

The mainstream environmental movement has also often used Indigenous people as props rather than engaging as partners. As early as the 1970s, mainstream environmentalist

organizations aired ads featuring “the crying Indian” to promote antipollution campaigns (Krech 1999), deploying racialized images of Indigenous people as noble yet powerless victims of environmental degradation. This image of the “ecological Indian,” which simultaneously creates an equivalency of Indigenous peoples with nature and asserts Indigenous nonuse of it (Harkin and Lewis 2007), has been strategically taken up by environmentalists in providing an argument against contemporary Western industrial society and a romanticized view of the past (Nadasdy 2005; Willow 2009). It is within this same trope, however, that colonialism is made invisible and settlers can become the rightful stewards of the land. The “ecological Indian” can only exist in the absence of modern Indigenous people, since it harkens back to a time before the present, implying that Indigenous people and nature are both currently disappearing/disappeared (Ray 2013). Mainstream campaigns have also clashed directly with Indigenous people’s livelihoods, most notably in Canada in the case of the campaign against the seal hunt (Arnaquq-Baril 2016; Kitossa 2000).

Understandably, Indigenous peoples have not taken up the frame environmentalism offered. Instead, Indigenous environmental work in Turtle Island has often taken place within sovereignty movements, where returning the land or managing extraction fits within a larger decolonial frame (LaDuke 1999; McGregor 2004; Varese 1996; Whetung 2016). Recent examples of this work include the mobilization around Standing Rock, an ongoing blockade at Unist’ot’en against oil exploration, and opposition to fracking at Elsipogtog First Nation. Indigenous communities are claiming their rights to refuse and rejecting bids for recognition by the settler colonial state. Instead, they are drawing on arguments rooted in sovereignty.

### *Environmentalism and the Environmental Justice Movement*

In contrast, Black and Latinx organizers started naming their work environmental justice (Bullard and Wright 1987; Taylor 1997). The environmental justice movement defined itself by its attention to relations of racialization and class and explicitly disidentified with the environmental movement. Much work of the environmental justice movement has focused on the health of communities in relation to environmental hazards. The movement has grown astronomically in recent decades, and there is extensive academic work documenting environmental racism and resistance (Bullard 1993, 2000; Cole and Foster 2001; Pulido 2000; Taylor 2000, 2014).

In contrast, the mainstream environmental movement has prioritized campaigns that ignore the disproportionate racialized and classed impacts of environmental damage, particularly in the siting of toxic waste (Bullard 2000). Campaigns have prioritized solutions that reproduce colonial relations of exploitation and dispossession, like buying up tracts of rainforest (Cox and Elmquist 1993; Lizarralde 2003) and UN REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) strategies (Cabello and Gilbertson 2012), which locate the solutions to environmental damage caused by those in the Global North in the Global South. These approaches to carbon credits allow wealthy Northerners to buy the “right” to pollute more, while Southerners have land use dictated and constrained in specific ways in order to “make up for” pollution generated in the Global North. For decades, mainstream environmentalist organizations have faced public criticisms for these approaches, yet they have largely continued to frame the goals of the environmental movement in narrowly constructed, technocratic, and dehistoricized ways.

This brief overview of the colonial and racist roots of environmentalism in Canada and the United States may be atypical conversations within mainstream environmentalism. However, it is a history that environmentalists need to acknowledge and engage with in their present-day work.

### *Environmentalism and Solidarity*

Solidarity is not a foundational element of the environmental movement. Despite this, over the last decade we have seen a rise in discourses of solidarity as movement participants strive to meet the critiques stemming from racialized and colonized communities about the limits of environmentalism. One way this has been mobilized is through coalitions. Environmentalists have also turned to the possibilities of work in solidarity in an effort to enact the principles of climate justice, centering coalitional work that takes on broader social relations than the environmental movement has tended to engage in the past. Environmental coalitions have varied widely based on their context but have often included coalitions on anti-logging campaigns (Takeda and Röpke 2010; Willow 2012), anti-pipeline work (Bradshaw 2015), and labor rights (Frundt 2010; Mayer et al. 2010; Obach 2004; Rose 2003).

Coalitions between environmental groups and other social movement or labor organizations are often complex because of differing reasons for organizational involvement in a particular issue. However, these coalitions are possible and have been particularly successful on a more local scale where members experience the same social and environmental impacts (Mix 2011) or between groups that have a common local target and put effort into generating mutually supporting narratives (Black et al. 2016). Other successful collaborations have taken place between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities that are geographically proximate and therefore have a common interest in a particular local effort (Sherman 2010) or between Indigenous communities and a group created for the explicit purpose of working in solidarity (Da Silva 2010; Land 2015). That said, even in the context of coalition efforts, environmental organizations may take up colonial or paternalistic behaviors (Pickerill 2009).

While there are examples of productive and generative solidarity work from within the environmental movement, research also documents how fraught these relationships can be. For example, activism around Clayoquot Sound in the early 1990s stemmed from Nuu-chah-nulth sovereignty work to assert sustainable forest management, with environmentalists joining that campaign to protect “pristine wilderness” (Braun 2002) from deforestation. This is one of the most cited examples of environmentalist-Indigenous solidarity, yet Nuu-chah-nulth community members and researchers have argued that the campaign was neocolonial (Atleo 2010; Braun 2002). The collaborations were contingent and short lived; not long after the campaign, the Nuu-chah-nulth asked Greenpeace to leave because of conflicting goals, tactics, and epistemologies (Atleo 2010; Braun 2002). Across these stories, we can see the challenges that coalition work poses as different political commitments, cultural resources, and access to power come into tension. These instances show us how philosophies and practices of solidarity can be contested and contradictory, as well as fluid and flailing.

### **On Solidarity**

Given the racialized and colonial history of the mainstream environmental movement, it is particularly interesting that academic discussions of solidarity in the environmental movement rarely engage the politics of racialization and colonialism. Nowhere in the literature do we find a substantial exploration of how race and colonialism shape the context of environmental solidarity, either making solidarity all the more necessary in response, or reflecting on the ways in which solidarity itself may remap racial and colonial logics (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012). Because this is largely overlooked in the writing on environmental coalitions, we look to other social movements that were founded explicitly to do

solidarity work. We take this up with the goal of offering participants in the mainstream environmental movement an expanded language with which to think about how we disrupt the whiteness and settler coloniality of environmentalism.

The idea of solidarity is taken up in vastly different ways across literatures, from philosophy and political theory (Bayertz 1999; Hooker 2009; Scholz 2008), to feminist theory (Dean 1996; Mohanty 2003), to curriculum studies (Swalwell 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández 2012; Lissovoy and Brown 2013), and beyond. The most common thread connecting these ideas is the shared belief that “solidarity” is used inconsistently and is in need of more systematic theorization (Bayertz 1999; Gaztambide-Fernández 2012; Power and Charlip 2009; Sundberg 2007; Wilde 2007). We can see that diversity across articles on solidarity rooted in movement contexts, many of which are written by scholar activists embedded in solidarity campaigns. These articles explore movements including Latin America solidarity (Finley-Brook and Hoyt 2009; Olesen 2004; Power 2009; Sundberg 2007), accompaniment (Coy 1997; Koopman 2012; Mahrouse 2014; Weber 2006), anti-sweatshop (Armbuster-Sandoval 2005; Cravey 2004; L. Featherstone 2002; Traub-Werner and Cravey 2002), fair trade (Hussey and Curnow 2016; Polynczuk-Alenius and Pantti 2016; Wilson and Curnow 2013), Palestine (Bakan and Abu-Laban 2009; Gale 2014; Pollock 2008; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2008; Tabar 2017), HIV/AIDS (Klug 2005), and other movements. In this article, we focus on solidarities that bridge place and power—there is extensive writing about solidarity in the labor movement, recent histories of South-South solidarities, especially those sustaining anticolonial revolutions (Tabar 2017), as well as what Nishnaabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) labels “co-resistors,” including Black-Brown solidarity (Tuck et al. 2014). While these solidarity praxes may prove quite instructive to environmentalists, they operate from distinctive sets of politics. These examples foreground shared experiences of exploitation across impacted groups, whereas the ideas of solidarity we take up here are predicated on disparate social locations, as we will interrogate in subsequent sections.

Works taking up solidarity rooted in movement usage rarely make their definition explicit. In most of these discussions, solidarity is understood to be activism in one place—geographical, socioeconomic, political—that works to defend the rights of people in a different place (Passy 2001; Olesen 2005; Sundberg 2007). Various authors outline the core philosophies of solidarity work, suggesting that solidarity is defined by its attention to work on behalf of others (Finley-Brook and Hoyt 2009; Gould 2007; Power and Charlip 2009; Sundberg 2007), though they also stress that solidarity should be differentiated from charitable work on behalf of others (Kraemer 2007). Sara Koopman (2012) recognizes that the difference is foundational to solidarity activists, though arguably difficult for the untrained eye to recognize. These articles suggest that while charity makes no effort to disrupt oppressive systems or imbalances of power but rather helps people within existing systems, solidarity is constructed as a process of amplification (Hechter 1988, Koopman 2012) or standing alongside (Brown and Yaffe 2014, Shohat 2001). These campaigns are understood as being based in shared political vision (Finley-Brook and Hoyt 2009; Gale 2014; Gill 2009; Hussey and Curnow 2016; Mahrouse 2014; Power and Charlip 2009; Rippe 1998; Tabar 2017), though this is not without complication. Solidarity thereby avoids reinforcing power imbalances through mechanisms of empowerment or help, but instead recognizes that the work undertaken is a shared goal of all participants in the solidarity effort (Pickerill 2009). With this understanding, North-South solidarity work is not solely for the benefit of Southern activists: it is in service of a more just and livable planet for all, or shared liberation (Routledge 2003).

Across the strategies for solidarity, the distinguishing features are a recognition of inequitable power relations and an attempt to prefigure different kinds of relationships. This means that solidarity strategies explicitly attempt to use disparate access to power and



privilege as part of their strategic interventions (Koopman 2012; Mahrouse 2014). Others have discussed obligation (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012) as a motivating feature of solidarity work, suggesting that people have a requirement to participate based on the ways that they benefit from and/or are implicated in the systems they seek to challenge (Wilson and Curnow 2013). Also within this framework is the idea of the importance of people who benefit from structural privilege in current systems working within their own communities to spread understanding of privilege and broaden the community of people working to counteract systems of oppression (Finley-Brook and Hoyt 2009; Gill 2009; Hussey and Curnow 2016; Koopman 2012; Kraemer 2007), or to strategically focus on advocacy work within their own countries in support of campaigns elsewhere in the world (Finley-Brook and Hoyt 2009; Klug 1995).

Many articles that trace how solidarity collaborations break down highlight the unequal power relations that define solidarity relationships, as people strive to work across difference. Juanita Sundberg (2007) critiques the “paternalistic relations,” arguing that these continually mark those receiving solidarity as subordinate and erasing the work and agency of impacted communities. Other authors also highlight the tensions that can arise when different allied groups’ goals come into conflict or are not closely aligned (Black et al. 2016; Finley-Brook and Hoyt 2009; Gill 2009). They demonstrate how the power imbalances noted become highly salient when there is incongruity or lack of communication about goals, since the privileged group’s framework and tactics tends to trump the group they claim to be in solidarity with (Gill 2009). They also argue that these asymmetric relationships have the potential to inadvertently reduce productive participation of members of the more privileged group in the solidarity relationship who abdicate decision-making roles for political reasons (Petray 2010).

In the next section, we further explore the racialized and colonial implications of undertaking solidarity work, and problematize the assertion that solidarity dismantles oppressive systems. We argue that solidarity fails to offer redress for racialized and colonial logics within the environmental movement and instead may plunge us deeper into these logics.

### Paradoxes of Racialized Solidarity

Though environmental activists may turn to discourses of solidarity as a way of addressing the racializing and colonial practices of the environmental movement, the philosophy of solidarity is still deeply embedded in the dominant relations of racialization and colonialism. Indeed, as Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) argues, solidarity strategies often reinscribe colonial logics and obscure complicity in colonization. Gada Mahrouse argues that whiteness is intrinsic to solidarity activism: solidarity is “a strategy built around the notion that people in positions of power are more likely to take notice of the brutality and injustice going on in various places if white and/or First World citizens become involved” (2014: 4). For the scholars who attend to the racialized logics of solidarity, critiques circulate around the idea of solidarity as a type of “jiu-jitsu” (Mahony and Eguren 1997) that simultaneously recognizes asymmetrical power relations and attempts to use power to transform these very relations (Coy 1997; Koopman 2012; Weber 2006). These scholars gesture toward several paradoxes embedded within this logic, tracing how solidarity frames rely on and reinscribe racial and colonial ideas.

While solidarity tactics tend to be framed as antiracist, they also recenter white/settler/privileged people. Problematically, those purporting to act in solidarity are not always aware of this centering. The logics of solidarity require the presence of a privileged person in order for the work to proceed. At the same time, paradoxically, the privileged presence

is framed as peripheral and in support (Koopman 2012; Mahrouse 2014). In this way, the whole repertoire of action hinges on privileged people's participation, making them the linchpin of such strategies. Solidarity is predicated on the fact that in a white supremacist society, white bodies and white voices matter more. While seeking to leverage this logic, activists leave it uncontested and, in fact, trade on the logic (Mahrouse 2014; Tabar 2017). Leey'sun scholar Rachel Flowers argues that the logics of settler privilege are particularly visible in settler-Indigenous solidarity work. She argues that in deploying their privilege to support Indigenous peoples' resistance, settlers often fail to recognize their ability to choose when to support decolonial struggles. Through this mobilization of privilege, Flowers argues, "Indigenous sites of resistance also become sites where our domination is sustained rather than interrupted" (2015: 35).

The critiques of race, white privilege, and solidarity also point to how this makes doing whiteness—a position that many solidarity activists reject as a political stance—central to the performance of doing solidarity, because in order to reap the benefits of privileged people's positions, they must be legible as white, so they must play up aspects of whiteness that are valued under white supremacy (Koopman 2012; Mahrouse 2014; Weber 2006). This is particularly complicated for those involved in solidarity action who are mixed or people of color. In order for them to participate in these strategies, they often must explicitly try to perform whiteness (Mahrouse 2014) in order to access the benefits of privilege and thus mobilize the strategic interventions. This dynamic places people of color in situations where they are unable to engage the same tactics as their white colleagues because they cannot or will not pass as white. We also see instances in which settler activists of color must position themselves as similarly responsible for settler violence as white settlers, which can erase the colonial violence that is and has been enacted on non-Indigenous racialized people (Byrd 2011; Lawrence and Dua 2005; Morgensen 2015).

For solidarity strategies predicated on the idea of amplifying the voices of impacted communities, a whole other set of contradictions arises. While privileged activists claim that more people will listen to their voices based on their social locations—often correctly—they then speak for others, a practice that they argue against (Mahrouse 2014). And when they do receive disproportionate press coverage or attention, they then have to stress that the stories of the directly impacted are, in fact, most important. The very presence of privileged solidarity activists belies that point: if the stories of impacted communities are more important and are the ones that should be heeded, why are solidarity activists in front of the cameras? Other scholars have also worked to negotiate and articulate this contradiction, arguing that there is a difference between speaking for and speaking alongside (Shohat 2001), or that these strategies draw on problematic ideas of conquest, exploration, and objectivity (Tilley and Cokley 2008). Sara Ahmed (2007) criticizes the move, suggesting that only the privileged have access to others' narratives in this way and that the privilege to document others' lives reinforces rather than undermines the logic of white supremacy. Along similar lines, Mahrouse (2014) argues that the "speaking alongside" approach to solidarity is a racialized privilege that is obscured through the logics of neutrality and exceptionalism, both of which become reified as white or privileged people step in and speak for. In doing so, they suggest to other similarly situated people that the political struggle matters because of the privileged person's exposure to risk and that reports can now be trusted because the situation is being documented "objectively" by a privileged person. These ideas actively reinforce supremacist notions of who is credible and valuable. Solidarity strategies that use these approaches are implicated in reinforcing deeply problematic societal structures.

Unanga scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) have stressed the need to recognize incommensurability in solidarity or coalition-based collaboration. They suggest that

while there may be some desired common outcome that overlaps across movements, the foundational reasons for the movements' existences are fundamentally different. Without recognizing this, attempts to collaborate closely can replicate colonial practices by subsuming Indigenous sovereignty, or the rights of other impacted communities, under a more powerful or privileged movement. Sally Scholz (2008) makes a related, though separate, argument about the significance of epistemological privilege. This points to what Geopol scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004) labels epistemologies of whiteness, where we can trace how dominant Eurowestern ways of knowing are mobilized in solidarity relationships despite the intentions of privileged activists, and that these undermine opportunities for decolonial solidarity.

Dhillon argues "that without an *explicit and deep* anti-colonial analysis we run the risk of reinscribing the narrative of white settler benevolence . . . and a colonial subjectivity that keeps white settler power intact" (2015: 6). The scholarship in this area notes that solidarity activists are often aware of these contradictions and their complicity in reinscribing racial hierarchy, yet they continue taking up strategies that place them in these paradoxes (Mahrouse 2014; Weber 2006). Mahrouse (2014) demonstrates that the existence of privileged people wanting to work in solidarity, follow the leadership of impacted communities, and not be in a position of asymmetric power does not change the power relations but instead makes them more visible and more uncomfortable. For example, activists on the ground know that the rejection of a charity model as condescending can also contradict requests for philanthropic support. In these instances, solidarity activists are caught in a paradox of not wanting to mobilize their economic power over impacted communities while also intending to follow the direction of the community (Weber 2006). They know that they are participating in struggles that are not their own, and that this is a potentially problematic position, yet they participate, arguing that the invitation of communities soothes some of the contradictions inherent to their participation. These contradictions do not resolve themselves and persistently pose problems for antiracist and anticolonial allies to try to navigate.

In part, the choice to continue amid so many contradictions is a conscious political strategy, though it may also be embedded in what Razack (1998) calls the "race to innocence," a process of differentiation wherein white people seek to avoid implication or complicity in racial hierarchies through strategies which will earn absolution. Activists are conscious of the paradoxes they find themselves embroiled within and are navigating political realities on the ground. Their moves to innocence are not cynical strategies but rather agentic and imperfect attempts to prefigure other social relations. However, Flowers argues that "settler decolonization is itself a self-interested process in the desire for recognition by the colonized" (2015: 37) and that this move by settlers to seek affirmation repurposes Indigenous activism in service to resolving settler shame. She argues that this renders Indigenous struggles "intelligible so as to consume them" (38), words that echo bell hooks's (1992) warnings that by "eating the other," power and privilege are reasserted. These contradictions are inherent to solidarity work, pointing to the difficulty of intervening in racial and colonial processes, even from positions of critique and relationship. The work to uncover these paradoxes is helpful for laying bare the terms of participation so that activists can be aware of the landscape and their precarious positions within it.

Immersed in these contradictions, we are aware of the impulse to disengage from solidarity work, yet this too is a paradoxical position. Turning away from the contradictions inherent in making use of resources and privileges of the environmental movement to work with Indigenous peoples because it causes too much anxiety for environmentalists also serves to maintain these privileges, and does nothing to escape them. Ahmed (2000) challenges the idea that withdrawal is a valid approach. She suggests that this too confirms the

privilege of those who refuse to participate. Mahrouse (2014) critiques this stance as well, suggesting that unreflectively assuming a position of silence does nothing to work toward antiracism and decolonization, and instead centers whiteness and white comfort.

### Moving Forward in the Contradictions

The contradictions of solidarity create a conundrum for mainstream environmentalists who are hoping to do work that disrupts the long histories of colonialism and racialization that have, in many ways, defined the movement over its history. Solidarity has been offered as a strategy for navigating the racialized and colonial ugliness, a way to acknowledge and transform the asymmetrical power relations, and a way to center accountability to impacted communities. Yet if solidarity itself reinscribes racial and colonial relations, centering white settlers and soothing white settler anxiety, that does not, in and of itself, enable us to interrupt the problematic features of environmentalism or do environmentalism differently. Our project here is not to condemn solidarity initiatives as bad, evil, or irredeemable. Nor is it to take up solutioning, ranking the interventions highlighted in the literature and providing a list of rules for how to do solidarity. Indeed, lists such as these are widely circulated, indicating that rules alone are not enough to address the paradoxes. Our purpose here is to acknowledge that solidarity, like environmentalism, is an imperfect strategy, embedded within the dominant social relations of colonialism, racialization, and capitalism.

Solidarity scholars recognize that global conditions require action, and action that is informed by an understanding of the ways in which racialization and colonialism structure the lived realities of injustice. Through this lens, these scholars argue that, while failing to meet antiracist and decolonial ideals, solidarity interventions that rely on inequitable power relations and mobilizing individualized privilege may still result in changed conditions on the ground. Despite how race and colonialism are leveraged in solidarity work, each author, in their own way, argues that “activists need to recognize that certain global conditions demand that they utilise whatever available options exist, including those that are not necessarily transformative,” (Mahrouse 2014: 147). Drawing from the work of scholars of solidarity, we suggest that environmentalists who want to engage in solidarity strategies need to do so fully aware of the contradictions they are embedded within.

For us, this is not an analytic shrug or platitude; it is an ethic. It is an intentional effort to avoid moves to innocence—to acknowledge that environmentalists are immersed in contradictions and that we still have a responsibility to engage, and to engage accountably. This may feel unsatisfying, even unsettling, in that it offers no tidy solutions. This position requires us, as settlers, to constantly reckon with the contradictions of our work and our positionality on stolen land in a movement that is foundationally quite problematic.

To take up this ethic, we must consider what Whetung (2017) theorizes as “unreconciliation”<sup>5</sup>—a political act that recognizes colonial violence and dispossession and starts from the premise that there is limited possibility for repair. Drawing on Nishnaabeg teachings, Whetung’s argument for “remaining unreconciled” asks settlers to sit with the violence, the realities of what we have done and are doing, and to accept the magnitude and senselessness of what we have done. Remaining unreconciled holds potential in the context of environmentalism, pointing us toward an approach that does not gloss over the racialized, colonial roots or ongoing damage the movement is implicated in. It points us to work that does not seek absolution but sits and works within the realities of racialized settler colonialism while constantly attending to the ways in which our work is implicated in the very logics many of us attempt to work against. This requires settlers to “reveal ourselves as vulnerable ‘not knowers’ who are willing to examine our dual positions as colonizer-perpetrators and

colonizer-allies” (Regan 2010: 28). Whetung (2017, p. 18) argues that remaining unreconciled is a way “to hold space to imagine a different type of relationship from where we are.”

For mainstream environmentalists to engage the contradictions of solidarity is to open possibilities of remaining unreconciled. This requires that we grapple with the racism and colonialism tied up not only in environmentalist histories but also in the reconciliation processes of solidarity. It requires us to inscribe the wrongdoings of environmentalism into our everyday activism and in our ongoing relationships. It is unsettling and it is paradoxical, yet it is a foundation from which we might try to build a different type of relationship.

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### ■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Lila Asher, Amil Davis, Indigo Esmonde, Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, Caitlin Henry, Andrew Kohan, Erica Kohl-Arenas, Victor Lorentz, Jean-Paul Restoule, and Maddy Whetung for their feedback on earlier drafts. This research was conducted with the support of the Vanier CGS and the SSHRC Bombardier CGS.

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### ■ NOTES

1. For a more thorough treatment of Standing Rock activism, see Dhillon and Estes (2016, forthcoming).
2. Reconciliation and solidarity are both imperfect strategies for engaging in settler colonial and racialized relations of power, which call on people from dominant groups to work alongside those in marginalized groups to redress violence and dispossession. Post Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC 2015), we can see how the politics of reconciliation are being consumed by the Canadian state while at the same time doing little/nothing to destabilize the status quo (Coulthard et al. 2014; Simpson 2011, 2017; Whetung 2016). We see the way settlers are taking up the work of reconciliation—beyond the empty “apologizer’s apology” (Mackey 2013) and state retrenchment—as fundamentally a discussion of solidarity.
3. Joe is a white woman of Cuban, Swiss, and British descent. Anjali is a mixed race woman of Indian and Irish descent.

4. While we recognize and appreciate the broader mobilization of environmentalism that arguably encompasses environmental justice and Indigenous environmentalism, as well as other movements and campaigns, it is outside the scope of this article to do a thorough treatment of these bodies of work. Our goal here is to demonstrate the ways in which the frames of mainstream environmentalism erase and foreclose other approaches. Our references to these bodies are thus (unfortunately) cursory, intended to point to important bodies of work, while focusing on our argument about the mainstream movement.
5. Maddy shared this framework recently while walking with Joe and her dog (and arguably over years of discussion), pointing to what Hunt and Holmes (2015) call relationships of everyday decolonization as sites for solidarity and radical theorization.

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